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ONE NATION INVISIBLE: U.S. VETERANS OF COLOR AND THE AUTHORING OF CULTURAL CITIZENSHIP THROUGH ASYMMETRICAL AUTHORSHIP

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ABSTRACT

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Sheeba Varkey

The national story of America is one of a country that has managed the contradictory: many bodies coming together, "out of many, one." However, such a mythos naturally evades the problematic erasure of many cultural and minority bodies and stories, in the proposition that unity demands such an erasure. As an extension of American civil society, the U.S. military has operated as a part of this system of whiteness, while its military operations have been celebrated as victory for progress and democratic ideals, particularly in WWII. Bodies of color, recruited into the national agenda through military service, while historically denied equal freedoms and rights under American civilian society, highlight, and uphold, this systemic contradiction. Military whiteness, a structural and implicit form of whiteness, surfaces in both the WWII era and now in the 21st century military in racially exclusive recruitment language, war preparation and policies, and in media portrayals such as military advertising. As such, military service for servicemen of color becomes a "no man's land", a constantly shifting space, where the serviceperson's individual identity and work become unregistered or submerged within the national agenda of the abstract national subject: the American G.I. Military service is thus not only a civic duty or national obligation, but the site and catalyst of a particular kind of citizen authoring: a critical cultural citizenship for

servicepersons of color. This form of cultural citizenship is pronounced as an asymmetrical authorship, an indirect reckoning with whiteness. This dissertation presents three archival examples of asymmetrical authorship through black WWII veterans and cultural producers Romare Bearden, abstract expressionist visual artist, Masood Ali Warren, sculptor and painter, and John Henrik Clarke, Africana Studies founder and activist. Their authorship, whether in private soldier letters building community, visual art during their military service, recordings or journal writings, represent their bodily reality in resistant and parallel ways, as a new form of cultural citizenship, critical of the American identity while deeply embedded within its national hegemony. America's myth of exceptionalism is thus contradicted by the work of the very soldiers that served such an ideal.

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Chapter One: Wages of War: American military service and asymmetrical authorship as black cultural citizenship

"There is no present or future, only the past, happening over and over again, now"

Eugene O'Neill

"today, i passed
a mirror and did not see a body, instead
a suggestion, a debate, a blank

post-it note there looking back. i
haven't enough room to both rage and
weep. i go to cry and each tear turns

to steam. I say *I matter* and a ghost
white hand appears over my mouth"

Donte Collins (2016), "what the dead know by heart"

In January of 2017, President Trump's annual message to Congress included, as is traditional, invited guests. One of these guests was Carryn Owens, widow of Navy SEAL William "Ryan" Owens. Ryan Owens was the one American military casualty among 23 casualties of an American anti-terrorism raid in Yemen. During his speech, President Trump addressed a weeping Mrs. Owens directly, describing Ryan Owens as "a

warrior and a hero-battling against terrorism, and securing our nation….Ryan's legacy is etched into eternity." In October of 2017, in another duty along the line of presidential ritual, Trump made a condolence call to the grieving widow of Sgt. LaDavid Johnson, a member of the Green Berets who died in a raid in Niger. In his phone call to Myesha Johnson, it was reported that Trump said that Johnson, "knew what he signed up for", and referred to Sgt. Johnson as "your guy." Mrs. Johnson was reported to be distressed that President Trump never seemed to know, and did not mention, the fallen Special Forces serviceman by name.

The resulting furor and backlash over Trump's handling of Sgt. Johnson's death, a black serviceperson, seen in stark contrast to his valorization of Ryan Owens, a white serviceperson, is a narrative of forgetting and remembrance delineated by race. Where one serviceman's name was forgotten, his service seen as an obligation that he "signed up for", the other was described as a "hero", and thereafter "etched into history". These incidents are not personal failings on the part of one politician, but rather a marker of America's historical realities as they replicate over time. In America, it is clear that matters of nation, identity and belonging are not enclosed areas of historical reality but dynamic patterns, perpetuating futures that seem to replicate the past. The history of America takes on two continuous strands of realities: one acknowledged, hegemonic written story with mythologized founders and participants and another missing or incomplete narrative of marginalized subjects. Events in history, in Hayden White's definition, "become historical only in the extent to which they are represented as subjects of a specifically historical kind of writing" (2) and historical discourse "is a special kind of language use" (7). The weight of language use and narrativity in shaping historical

artifacts indicates that what is *written*, or recorded and acknowledged, and what is not, have profound implications for our understanding of events, movements, and national identity. How writers matter, and which authors of knowledge are considered as producers in this arena, also thus prove important to consider. By extension, this conversation about history and writing then becomes about what is historically considered American, and what is not.

In considering American identity, I am thus interested not only in the produced text of history and memory, but the writers and producers themselves. Extending the study of American identity into the study of authorship becomes not only about past histories as written text, but also social practices, unexamined genres, and private archives of the unexamined components of American citizenship: authorial practices of marginalized Americans, a claim to cultural citizenship.

Authoring is often connected to writing, which has been traditionally understood as work that is text-based and alphabetic construction and composition. As such, it has over time been relegated to and studied as what occurs within the boundaries of writing pedagogy, process and instruction. However, writing studies scholars such as Jason Palmeri have argued that multi-modal forms of composing, encompassing other modes of literacy and media, have existed for a long time. Writing is better defined as a practice, built on convictions of relations, locations and positions: an act between people, shaped by localized spaces, and a reflection of individual values that shape the author's identity (Vandenburg, Hum and Clary-Lemon 8). This definition acknowledges that writing, and authoring by extension, morphs according to context and purpose. The study of compositional practices thus moves into many locations beyond the classroom,

acknowledging that writing is always a power-based venture, shaped in individual and communal practice. The work of writing is best viewed, I argue, as one tied to context, a socially-dependent rather than isolated, individual act. As such, it is not merely confined to a production of words, but one of work, and social practice, "acts of human involvement" (Brandt 7). This proves particularly significant in examination of how one large group of marginalized Americans, black Americans, write themselves into American history. I examine authorship via the national civic duty of military service, for servicepersons of color.

The post-structuralist argument about authorship removes the value of the author to the text. According to Michel Foucault, authorship is a retroactive fiction of a "doer", a projection of the reader's desire to have an agent for the source material. Foucault notes that "writing unfolds like a game that inevitably moves beyond its own rules….it is primarily concerned with creating an opening where the writing subject endlessly disappears"(300-301). What Roland Barthes calls the "death of the author", in Foucault's examination, is what he calls the "author-function." The author's function, in Foucault's argument, is merely to provide a way of handling textual material that projects the illusion of an author doing the work. This post-structuralist view of the author comes into the problem of how both Foucault and Barthes sees the universal subject, or as in my project, the white, propertied, straight, Christian citizen subject. This implicit deracination means that a rethinking of the subject via race is necessary. As Edward Said notes of Foucault's disposal of the role of the human subject, "however much power may be a kind of indirect bureaucratic discipline and control, there are ascertainable changes stemming from who holds the power, who dominates whom, and so forth" (710). Said

identifies a Eurocentrism in Foucault's theorizing, "the extent to which the ideas of discourse and discipline are assertively European...used also to administer, study, reconstruct- and then subsequently to occupy, rule and exploit- almost the whole of the non-European world" (711). Barbara Christian likewise points out the problems of western theory, an "academic hegemony" (69), defined by abstract, disconnected expressions, and how ill-suited and prescriptive it is in discussions of the literatures of different ethnicities and cultures. It is not a theorizing based on "multiplicity of experiences" (Christian 76). In the same vein of erasure, Lisa Lowe critiques how American citizenship functions for the immigrant, "naturalizing a universality that exempts the 'non-American' from its history of development", only using multiculturalism as a system that "aestheticizes ethnic differences as if they could be separated from history" (9). My project's necessary intervention involves the human subject, and is into the standard notions of authorship and its intersection with citizenship. I examine writing as asymmetrical authorship, a cultural practice. I am considering the ways in which subjects of color 'write' themselves into recorded archives and history. Authorship for black subjects, a topic unconsidered by Foucault and Barthes, means a complicated claim to agency, a forbidden literacy.

One avenue into authorship for black authors has historically been tied to literacy. Literacy had particular importance for black Americans during and after slavery due to its relationship to freedom, resistance and agency. In connecting writing, particularly literacy, to agency, Deborah Brandt points out that, "throughout recent history, literacy has often served as a stand-in for skin color in the ongoing attempts to subordinate African Americans" (106). Brandt shows how through sponsors of literacy, black

Americans have steadily increased their literacy rates despite state efforts to dismantle and discipline their attempts at self-determination. The effects of black literacy are also about its contexts for knowledge transfer and influence, as Jaqueline Royster (2000) notes in her study of elite nineteenth century black women. In Royster's study, the growth and use of literacy by well-educated black women also promoted values of activism, and connected it to literary preferences in their later authorship, through genres, styles, and occasions for writing.

The social constrictions around black literacy have profound implications for how black citizens learn and write, inside and outside the classroom. As researchers like Samy Alim, Geneva Smitherman and Vershawn Young have articulated, black language, its grammar and semantics, has often been dismissed, devalued, and erased from pedagogical considerations. As a result, black literacy and writing has not often been examined or assessed as valuable and meaningful inside institutional whiteness. The erasure of black realities as demonstrated by academic efforts at controlling and disciplining black language indicates that authorship is tangibly connected to identity and lived reality, but not always acknowledged or valued as such.

Although black authorship's connection to the rise of literacy is important work, confining authorship to the historical change in black literacy does not provide the full picture. Often literacy is measured and assessed in specifically biased ways, which erases the multifaceted work of people of color. Asao Inoue defines this as part of the system of a white racial *habitus*, "the structures of our writing assessments come from our society, our academic disciplines, and educational institutions, which have been organized to keep whites and whiteness dominant" (54). Inoue clarifies that race works through intelligence

assessment of literacy since, "the test does not account for the multiple literacies, the multilingual capacities, of all the students currently taking the test. It uncritically and unknowingly accounts for one kind of literacy, a dominant one, a hegemonic one, a white, middle class discourse" (27).

While Inoue believes that a writing classroom built on fair assessment rooted in antiracist work addresses this systemized inequality, other researchers advocate for an additional individual agency as a necessity. Collin Craig demonstrates, in his study of black male students in university settings, the use of a "critical self-consciousness" about language practice, coupled with institutional writing, "works as a kind of rhetorical action that challenges institutional practices that impact their learning" (Craig). Craig's work is evidence that outside the work of literacy alone, the learning of institutional languages helped black male students, who are often displaced outside academia, articulate asymmetrical power dynamics. Craig's work demonstrates the articulation of asymmetrical power requires dialogue about social dynamics and mentorship in navigating the system, outside the ability to decipher text itself.

Military veteran writing, a subject of concern for my project, has a similar entanglement with hegemony and voice. Joseph Darda (2016) notes the role of literature in developing the "military veteran" as part of the racial project of whiteness. He examines how post-Vietnam military veteran literature, like Joseph Hinemann's *Paco's Story*, reconfigures American veteran writing as a genre to render a new form of racial minority, the white male veteran. Veteran writing is also extensively researched and documented in writing studies, particularly in higher education, due to the increasing amount of student veterans on the G.I. Bill. Veteran writing projects can be as varied as

records from writing classrooms (Doe and Langstraat), civilian career prospects with military resumes (Kleykamp), and literary creative writing as the mark of the past military identity. Researchers have examined student veteran first year composition writing (Hinton), veteran writing as community outreach (Schell), veteran expressive writing as intervention and therapy (Krupnick et. al), cultural cohesion through veteran creative writing (Poudrier), programmatic approaches and suggestions for veterans in the classroom (Hart and Thompson). The growing field of Veterans Studies, a multidisciplinary subset inside Writing Studies, indicates that veteran writing is both varied and complex in its iterations. Yet, many of these recorded examples of writing are overwhelmingly alphabetic writings of veterans (honorably discharged servicepersons), and represent a majority white population, reflecting the demographics of modern American troops. As such, they often do not account for the author as a national subject on differences of ethnicity or color, or for authorship as a cultural practice intervening into national identity.

I see authoring as a coupling of the subject's rhetorical action and literacy practices. It is the avenue into expressing thought and identity, a view into the process of assembling, and includes the place of the individual inside this discursive community. Authoring can make the invisible strands of power visible, and showcases hegemony's connections to the subject-citizen. In considering the element of 'voice' in subjectivity, Jacqueline Royster notes that theory and practice melded should, "include voicing as a phenomenon that is constructed and expressed visually and orally, *and* as a phenomenon that has import also in being a *thing* heard, perceived, and reconstructed"(1118). Similarly, authorship is not only about produced text, the single author's moves of

agency, or institutional sponsorship and assessment, but a combination of all of the above. It can involve a textual product, but more importantly, it is also about a social practice that attempts to make meaning and purpose, which is particularly significant when political realities are erasing or marginalizing certain communities.

As such, it is necessary to consider authorship's implicit connection to citizen practices. Raymond Williams, in his identification of dominant, residual and emergent forms of culture, notes that often the dominant culture's reach into all corners of culture means that "the alternative, especially in areas that impinge on significant areas of the dominant, is often seen as oppositional", a method of capturing the subject's work in a recognizable form. For the emerging though, "yet even here there can be spheres of practice and meaning which, almost by definition...the dominant culture is unable in any real terms to recognize" (Williams 126). Authorial products that are a result of both individual agency and unstable political realities are thus not readily accessible, or publicly acknowledged, but are very real.

At times, the authors I discuss in the next few chapters are blurring the boundaries between visual/textual genres, and public/private spheres, as a new form of authoring. So, now authorship must ask new questions about authored products that have previously gone unseen: What is produced and what does it look like? How do these products exist, and in what form? Most importantly (for the reader and critic), how does an unearthing of this archive shift the existing narrative of what authoring's connection to American citizenship looks like?

The "no man's land" of black military service

I identify military service, not only as a civic duty, or a national obligation, but as the *site and catalyst* of a particular kind of citizen authoring: a critical cultural citizenship. Service in the U.S. military is distinct in its demand for state-sanctioned violence, and a national allegiance to the ideal of liberation, at the price of individual beliefs or realities. The military body demands an erasure of self, in service to a national agenda. The salary of such service, are the rights and liberties of American society, the advertised cliche that "freedom isn't free". For the black military serviceperson, particularly during WWII, this became the proverbial battlefield. Rather than highlight the liberatory nature of American force, the black serviceperson's presence inside this national apparatus destabilizes the complete enterprise. It forces a reckoning with previously cemented definitions of american exceptionalism, military service and cultural citizenship.

For the WWII black military person, whiteness was a space that he inhabited as a recruit into the nationalist agenda, but a space where he was rendered unintelligible: a no man's land. He both participated in a nationalist endeavor for liberation as agent, and was governed by the segregational policies that rendered him an inferior subject. This dual position of agent/subject did not provide him two identities, but seemingly no recognized identity. Although this no man's land was fraught with the perils of white supremacy, and the resulting loss of definitive identity for the serviceperson of color, I argue that this no man's land also proved to be a productive space for authorship for black military-citizens. It is a space where the black serviceperson can render his realities, through what I call an "asymmetrical" form of response to whiteness. This 'no man's land' then becomes a zone

of cultural practices, where black servicepersons negotiate different ways of belonging under institutionalized pressure to exclude or include them. Since these acts of authorship are asymmetrical by nature of their power relation to the hegemony, they have not registered under any current conceptual discourse. To take up this lack, I define their works as "asymmetrical authorship."

Asymmetrical Authorship Defined

The production of black soldier citizens, their social practices during WWII, present a form of authorship that engages with whiteness in productive and contradictory ways, presenting another practice of cultural citizenship. Clevis Headley argues for, a "moving beyond whiteness", through an Africana philosophical perspective,

> " Africana philosophy does not claim any symmetrical status with whiteness but instead, presents itself as the Other of whiteness. Thereby, it assumes an asymmetrical consciousness by challenging whiteness to listen to the voice of the Other...a voice long marginalized by the oppressive reign of whiteness" (90)

While Headley is talking about rectifying white philosophy by introducing Africana thought, I draw upon his argument to discuss how authorship works under an asymmetrical power structure. As the work of the marginalized does not always work in a symmetrical way, by presenting itself as what whiteness is not, it exists outside the available discourse- and, I argue, demands a new term of understanding, one that acknowledges its agentive moves of subversion and resistance: asymmetrical authorship.

Asymmetrical authorship is asymmetrical by definition because the power structure of the black writer is not the same as the white. Black asymmetrical authorship carved out a space of its own that resists and contests the hegemony of whiteness. Black authorship, particularly while the author remains a subject of its imperial power, cannot

address whiteness on equal terms within it. Instead, black authorship stakes a different claim, by creating its own sphere of discourse, albeit not on an equal playing field.

In the system of whiteness, black soldiers would be rendered the "other", defined as "not part of the norm" against the "same" of white citizenship. I argue that black soldiers re-inscribed the national black identity through authorship in this no man's land, against a national agenda that rendered them invisible and used their bodies, without providing them full citizen rights. I argue that the black soldier, authors his own existence and purpose, albeit in an "asymmetrical" way, through nontraditional genres and systems of authorship.

Cultural Citizenship and Belonging

I extended the examination of authorship to the products of asymmetrical power because they are acts of citizen-making in America, a settler state with ideological underpinnings. Outside of the legal system's definition of what citizenship means, minority communities have long defined citizenship on their informal terms as cultural practices, through cultural citizenship. Cultural citizenship is not dependent on the legal definition of citizenship (this itself fraught with white supremacist ideas of belonging), but rather on a continum of citizen practices, often rooted in minority community differences rather than assimilative similarities. Cultural citizenship as defined by the American cultural anthropologist Renato Rosaldo is "the right to be different and to belong in a participatory democratic sense" (402). Lok Siu expands on this definition of cultural citizenship as "behaviors, discourses, and practices that give meaning to citizenship as lived experience" (as cited in Maira 82). The contradiction inherent in this definition, to be "different" and "to belong", emphasizes the reality of democratic nations

such as America, where full citizenship is advertised while not always offered to everyone. For people belonging to minority communities, often immigrant communities, cultural citizenship is what Rosaldo calls the "vernacular" definition of citizenship, which encompasses cultural practices, languages, beliefs, and much more.

Cultural citizenship is often produced in the fault lines of democratic nations not living up to their ideals, as "lines of exclusion drawn by democracy in the United States have in the long run produced movements by the once-excluded and now-"new" citizen-subjects who demand recognition as full citizens" (Rosaldo 403). Often minority groups in America have what Lori Kido Lopez calls "different degrees of citizenship" (12), or a variety of cultural practices that may or may not align with dominant culture. Simultaneously, the state demands a certain level of compliance with cultural regulations on language, behavior, knowledge and other default citizen practices. As such, cultural citizenship can include when minority groups such as Latinx immigrants who might not be legal citizens advocate for citizen rights (Flores and Benmayor), and South Asian Muslim youths using dissent and a flexible understanding of the state negotiate their national identity (Maira). These practices are not necessarily assimilative, and are often marginal (Lopez 12), and do not uniformly suggest that conformity is the preferred status quo for minority citizens.

Although many of these bodies of research lean on community literacies and ethnographies, they are mainly coalesced around the subjects' efforts of belonging, or their move to "write in" their identities into the national narrative. Their work at the margins indicate that, inevitably, some of these works will go unregistered unless unearthed by researchers. This state of events marks the necessity of widening the lens of

what we call cultural practices to works that, implicitly or explicitly, blend both authorial purpose and the rhetorical "writing in ", an asymmetrical reckoning with hegemonic state forces, a critical cultural citizenship. I look at cultural practices on these margins through the authorship of servicepersons of color, specifically, of soldier letters, mentorship practices, a modern art series and private sketches. I see these as practices that are asymmetrical assertions against a monolithic national narrative, or practices of cultural citizenship.

Although cultural citizenship is often studied in minority immigrant communities, recent scholarship has begun to critically examine a community of color that did not voluntarily migrate to the U.S.: black Americans. Whether examining a parallel black print culture as a space for the theorizing and practice of black cultural citizenship (Spires), or the intersectionality of race and gender in black diasporic communities (Celeste), or the origins of birthright citizenship through black legal advocacy (Jones), researchers are beginning to show that black cultural citizenship is not merely a challenge to white supremacy, but a shaping of citizenship and American belonging on their terms. My dissertation joins this growing scholarship to showcase how black Americans "write in" their belonging in previously unmarked and unacknowledged ways. I write about and examine a form of cultural citizenship through asymmetrical authorship, on a site of national obligation: military service. Authorship during and after military service encompasses the variety of ways in which black military subjects "write" into American history through practices that are acts of cultural citizenship. Previously unexamined as either authorship or citizen acts, these acts of what I call "asymmetrical

authorship" demonstrate the work of marginalized citizens in a productive space of "no man's land" of military service.

Cultural Citizenship and black Americans

After the Emancipation Proclamation, the identity of a black person on American soil was left unclear. They were no longer property, but while citizenship was defined as white, black individuals were left undefined, until the 1870 amendment to the 1790 naturalization law, when blacks were granted formal citizenship.

The Dred Scott decision in 1857 was the landmark case that cemented the tenuous position of blacks in America. Despite black presence on American soil, even predating the country itself, the Supreme Court declared in the case of Dred Scott that blacks were not considered citizens, and their rights and responsibilities would be decided by the states. The decision made systemic racism into pervasive and standard legal practices across the nation. It took Congress' Reconstruction efforts, post-Civil War, to undo the work of Dred Scott. The 14th Amendment, ratified in 1868, cemented black citizenship in America through its language of birthright citizenship: "all persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States." Yet, cases like Plessy vs. Ferguson (1896) made segregation, a "separate but equal" legalized racism. It circumvented the language of citizenship to reduce blacks to second-class status, people "subject to the jurisdiction thereof", and thus reinscribed full American citizenship as white. It was Jim Crow in action, a systematic and legalized racism that continued to treat black Americans as people that did not belong as equal citizens in American society. This form of uneven and eroded citizenship makes the case for why cultural citizenship, a community's own practices, is more important.

Thus, to follow Aihwa Ong's definition, black American cultural practices, over American history, have been "self-making and being-made", first communal practice and discourse, and second, a citizenship defined but reduced by the hegemony of the supposed nation-state.The study of black cultural practices as black cultural citizenship is a necessity, as they demonstrate why it was essential for black Americans to re-write their own history outside the legal definition of citizen. It cements their status, since their involuntary migration, as Americans. However, black cultural citizenship cannot be collapsed into the cultural citizenship of many other minority groups in America. Unlike immigrants who came voluntarily, and even with a desire to claim American citizenship, black Americans who arrived through the slave trade were first considered property, then legalized as three fifths of the population, and finally, as citizens. The system of law sanctioned and divided black identity into second-class status consistently, in a way that it did not see or define other minorities. Inequalities of opportunity, education, poverty and many others remain today for black Americans as a result of this dichotomy. The evolution of black citizenship is distinctly original, and their subsequent cultural citizenship is also.

Yet the study of black cultural citizenship also touches on the very definition of what citizenship means for all Americans. America's domestic policies of inequality for black Americans, specifically Jim Crow, and black community policing, has been studied and put into practice across the world, in Hitler's Germany, U.S. military bases during WWII and today in policies in the war with Afghanistan and Iraq, as part of America's global war on Terror (Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Freedom's Sentinel). Birthright citizenship and immigration has also come under criticism today. Not only is it

clear that the definition of who can be called American continues to remain in flux, it is also apparent that black citizenship is not a historical reality, but an evolving one that touches on what it means to be American for all ethnic and racial groups, defining the nature of America itself.

Citizenship as Nick Crossley puts it, is "mutual recognition", or equal membership, and the public sphere is thus necessary for citizen engagement (43-44). So, the acts of cultural citizenship, it would follow, presume a continuum of non belonging to belonging, and are often recorded as performed in the public sphere. While many examples of black cultural practices and discourses can indeed be studied, in a variety of public genres such as music, art, literature and more, they are not examples of black cultural citizenship, in my definition, if they do not challenge the state of belonging in American society, *while within the national apparatus itself.* Black cultural citizenship, as I call it, critical cultural citizenship, exists in contradiction: where black citizens are not granted the agency or the rights of full citizenship, when they are muted or repurposed, while they serve the very country that erases their realities. This erasure of sorts means that their products, their work, have not been recorded as part of the national narrative on their terms. These works of authorship can only be seen in blips and fissures within the work of national service. I am looking specifically at examples of authoring outside the norm, in soldier letters, art series, private sketches, mentorship, because cultural citizenship allows access to these practices, which are missed if we focus only on legal citizen status. Black critical cultural citizenship, in other words, exists where it has not been permitted to exist.

America's citizenship as Whiteness

Citizenship in America has always been inextricably connected to whiteness, and who qualifies as a citizen, and who does not. The American nation is not based on the American people's material similarities or historical realities, but rather what Benedict Anderson calls an "imagined community", one bound by a national ideology. For America, this ideology is one marked by the narratives of Founding Fathers and the ideals of liberty, progress and freedom. The markings of whiteness inside this ideology are largely rendered invisible, its presence in American national identification "produc[ing] an axiomatic, taken-for-granted relationship between 'whiteness' and American-ness, leaving the former unmarked and invisible" (Dubois, hooks et. al, in Madriaga 84). America's exclusion of people of color from these inalienable rights, from the right to be considered full citizens, meant that for the Founding Fathers, and subsequently, American law and society, "white" and "American" were interchangeable.

While whiteness was embedded in the Constitution from the origin of the United States, the definition of who qualified as white was in flux. In 1790, Congress passed the first U.S. naturalization law that restricted citizenship to "white persons of good character", thus excluding native Americans, black Americans, women, slaves, among others. Legal cases that protested individual exclusions from citizenship on the 1790 exclusion argued for the subject's acceptance as citizenship as a degree of white, demonstrating, "the imprecisions and contradictions inherent in the establishment of the racial lines between whites and nonwhites" (Lopez 2). The definition of whiteness, written into these early laws that established American identity, measured whiteness as a necessary qualifier of Americanness, and established that the definition of whiteness

depends on what it was not. Thus, whiteness defined was dependent on American bodies of color (Lopez).

Subsequent naturalization laws constantly shifted the line of definition of 'American', and the groups of people who would be legally accepted as American citizens. The 1870 amendment to the 1790 law, for instance, granted citizens to "aliens of African nativity and to persons of African descent," while it revoked the citizenship of Americans of Chinese descent. The laws of American immigration and citizenship continued to change as the population of American grew increasingly diverse, but often in attempts to continually restrict the definition of American to reflect the elite.

In the era of immigration, American citizenship continued to be, as Matthew Frye Jacobson argues, built on racial constructs which were politically deployed. The European immigration experience in the early 20th century, far from being proof of American exceptionalism and liberality, demonstrates, "how crucial Europeans' racial status as 'free white persons' was to their gaining entrance...how profoundly dependent their racial inclusion was upon the racial exclusion of others; how completely intertwined were the prospects of becoming American and becoming Caucasian" (Jacobson 12). Whiteness was an evolving concept, molded by capitalism and an "imperative of responsible citizenship" (Jacobson 13).

After a period of intense nativism and the rise of the eugenics movement in the 1920s, the Johnson-Reed Act of 1924, which established racial quotas for immigration, ensured a decline in white immigration from European nations, and also excluded Chinese, Japanese, Indians and other Asians from naturalized citizenship. Previous concerns about the racial inferiority of some white immigrant populations, and the

subsequent dilution of the purity of the white race gave way to a different issue. Now the national concern about the "major divisions" (Jacobson 92) of race in immigration takes precedence, and differences that were important during the European immigration wave fade. White as a category begins to coalesce.

Between the 1920s and the end of WWII, there was a significant shift in the definition of whiteness, as the term "Caucasian", with the implied scientific authority, replaces the label "White". As immigration from Europe lessened, American-born generations of whites' attention to Old World concerns of differences and oppressions gave way to white privilege in the New World. Nazi Germany's appropriation of the term "race" also led to the erasure of the term of race in American popular culture, now replaced with "culture/ethnicity." Simultaneously, the mass migration of poor Southern blacks between the 1910s and 1940s, and the subsequent protest of Jim Crow and racial inequalities during WWII made Jim Crow, and racial relations, the salient topic of national concern. Jim Crow policies further solidified the white race as it clarified blackness, as "a scheme of black and white, which itself implied an absence of race on the white side and a presence of race on the black" (Jacobson 111).

David Roediger clarified the white working class' consciousness as one predicated on these foundations of race, where white workers shaped their identity not only in terms of their social class, but as non-white and non-slaves. Roediger points to the use of social and cultural force of language as a weapon, where white working class members positioned themselves as "hirelings" rather than "slaves", and "bosses" rather than "masters." In effect, the American white working class shaped and defined their identity in opposition to the black American identity, "identifying oneself by negation"

(60). So white identity was predicated on not being black. The presence of black bodies then, reinforces and points back to this system of whiteness.

The shift was not merely a linguistic one. Where once the concern was about the difference between groups of races as the cause of social problems, now the study of racial relations meant that social relationships were considered the root of problems. The language also shifted accordingly, from talk to "capacities", "geniuses", "imbecilism" to "equality", "justice", "democracy", "discrimination" and "prejudice" (Jacobson 104). Yet, the underlying mechanics of categorization remained the same, as both social activists and nativists categorized matters of race as pertaining to blackness, as whiteness both coalesced and transformed from a racial category into "ethnicity." This now homogenous whiteness was framed entirely in a black/white binary.

The Allies' victory in WWII had positioned America and its allies as upstanding democratic nations built on equality, in opposition to the totalitarian Nazi regime and the Holocaust's evidence of the horrors of racial policies. Racial liberalism redefines race as cultural after WWII, presenting America as a model democracy, to prove that America had moral legitimacy and was not compromised by white supremacy. Civil rights bills and the 14th amendment declared, by law, Americans as a diversity of people, but segregation and inequality still persisted, and so did whiteness, "privileged and stigmatized racial formations no longer mesh perfectly with a color line. Instead, new categories of privilege and stigma determined by ideological, economic, and cultural criteria overlay older, conventional racial categories so that traditionally recognized racial identities- black, Asian, white or Arab/Muslim- can now occupy both sides of the privilege/stigma opposition" (Melamed 2-3). Although Jim Crow policies were

eliminated, the status of the black citizen remains problematic, as "under racial liberalism, the Negro either is folded into state representation as an equivalent for the American ideal (a race-erased 'general American culture') or is pathologized" (Melamed 8).

The institutionalization of whiteness as American citizenship continues into the late 20/early 21st century. After the civil rights era of the 1960s, there is the advent of multiculturalism and a "colorblind" view of race and ethnicity, where whiteness shows up coded as the "individual", presenting racism and white supremacy subtextually rather than overtly. Peggy McIntosh notes the ties of white privilege to American democracy, "the obliviousness about white advantage...is kept strongly inculturated in the United States so to maintain the myth of meritocracy, the myth that democratic choice is equally available to all" (McIntosh). It is necessary then, not only that white advantage do its work for white citizens, but that the success of whiteness fuels the narrative that the 'american' dream of merit-based success is attainable for everyone.

Howard Winant calls this the "new right racial project", one where the neoliberal view of citizenship is informed by a doctrine of natural rights and Enlightenment ideals, along with "doctrines of European superiority", which historically "justified conquest of supposedly lesser peoples" (57-58). This double-pronged approach presents American society as "nonracial, color-blind, and democratic above a certain socioeconomic line and acutely race-conscious and coercive below that line" (Winant 57). The history and continued presence of whiteness in American citizenship thus demonstrates that, rather than an abhorrent historic anomaly from the country's democratic ideological origin, it is a fundamental trait of American society and citizenship. Whiteness is institutionalized

and embedded in the definition of America itself, and requires bodies of color to maintain it. "Americanness" has always been whiteness practiced in duality, story and practice: a continued narrativizing of the national ideology of liberation, paired with systemic inequalities based on racial difference.

In order to understand the inescapable structural nature of whiteness in America, it is necessary to acknowledge that America's foundations are built on white supremacy and anti-blackness, and not ideals of liberation and progress. According to Moon-Kie Jung, America is more of an empire-state rather than a nation-state, made of "territories of unequal political status", and a people with "differential access to rights and privileges" (3). Jung notes that the racialized spaces of the U.S. serve an insidious purpose, as "the continual misrecognition of the United States as a nation-state, not least by the state itself, has been integral to U.S. nationalism, and its attendant sense of exceptionalism, and thereby to the formation, fortification, and imperception of the United States as an empire-state" (4). Clevis Headley's critique of this same Western dominance of thought calls it an "the epistemic imperialism of the Same, namely, the dominance of whiteness and its colonization of being" (90) , and notes the necessity of an alternative to this dominant theory, in his view, one grounded in Africana thought. Howard Winant similarly posits that the myth of American exceptionalism, generated by liberal narrative, camouflages the fact that racism and whiteness is endemic, by design and structural. Thus, whiteness in the military presents in two ways: one, systemic, structural, invisible, surfacing sometimes as discrimination, and another, reliant on bodies of color to present a "multicultural", progressive military, in support of the

empire logic of the U.S., which needs subjects racialized differently to support white supremacy. Asymmetrical authorship steps in this gap then as an anti-imperial practice.

Military Conscription as Whiteness

As an extension of American civil society, the U.S. military is also thus part of the system of whiteness at the core of national identity. Where the military differs from civilian society is in its function as an enforcer of the national agenda, which requires both a communal "buying-in" of national ideals, and an individual commitment to uphold these values *in person*. The military system's specific code of values marks it as ideologically different from civilian society, in its sacrificial *bodily* commitment to ideals. The body of the American serviceperson is thus immensely valuable to the U.S. military as a necessary embodiment of sacrifice for national ideals. It is here, in the function of service, one bound in materiality, that American identity, one predicated on whiteness, seems to surface as a visible contradiction. The bodies of color, recruited into the national agenda through military service (a civic duty), while denied equal freedoms and rights under American civilian society, highlight, and uphold, the same national values. The black WWII serviceperson, for instance, fights for American values of liberation when he defeats Nazi Germany's forces. Simultaneously, the structural whiteness of American identity means that, in the 1930s/40s, he is subject to segregation and mistreatment as a black person. His experience in the U.S. military confuses his sense of self: both American and not, both seen and not. Fundamentally, the black serviceman's presence and service in the American military elucidates the real foundation of the American nation, which relies on his body to uphold its definition of whiteness and

citizenship. Thus, unlike the presence of white servicepersons (which reads, and is coded unproblematically as both patriotic and American), the serviceperson of color's recruitment and service, pulled into the military with regard to merit or equality, destabilizes the entire enterprise of liberation and progress represented by military service.

This instability inherent in the recruitment of people of color into the American military is problematic to the military's functional purpose. It threatens to destabilize the functionality of the US military by revealing its contradictory purpose, and, by extension, revealing the racial underpinnings of American identity. Thus the work of military whiteness is an attempt to stabilize American identity. It does this in two ways. One, military recruitment and public visual culture pronounces the military a racially liberal enclave or a color-blind one while presenting mythic bodily representations of soldiers as default white, and two, it co-opts select servicemembers of color into the national narrative of liberation and progress, while continuing racially exclusive practices. Both methods are meant to keep American identity static, and immutably white.

Military service, citizenship and whiteness

Although American military servicemembers have evolved, over time, from draftees to volunteers, military service continues to be upheld, consistently, as a hallmark of public service and civic duty. If military service is seen as a citizen's duty, it clearly follows that military servicepersons are thus full American citizens. This has not historically been the case. Although the American military has been largely white over time, black people have served in the military since the Revolutionary War (Phillips). Although servicemen fought in the military, they did not obtain the rights of full

American citizens as a result. Some theorists of race and U.S. empire like Gunnar Myrdal have argued that this kind of racism is an aberration from the norm of american progressivism, an "American dilemma": the contradiction between the nation's original ideals of "inalienable rights" for all and the exclusion of people of color from its privileges. My work argues that such violence and racism is built into the system. The American nation was supposedly founded on Jeffersonian ideals "premised in the existence of a homogeneous...citizenry…", but, "blacks would be a troublesome and corrupting element because whites would never accept them as equals" (Fredrickson 145). The early exclusion of people of color in America, blacks and Native Americans, made it clear, "all nonwhites were, from the beginnings of nationhood, commonly regarded as 'aliens' of the unassimilable kind" (Fredrickson 145). A naturalization law passed in 1790 specifically limited American citizenship to white immigrants. From the beginning of the nation, citizenship (and alien status) of people of color was defined in relation to white beliefs and perceptions of citizenship. Inclusion of people of different racial identities in the military threatened to destabilize the definition of American citizenship by pointing toward these flawed origins.

World War II proved to be significant in remaking the gatekeeping of legal citizenship. Americans of color served in the military during the war, both as volunteers and draftees, despite the segregation and Jim Crow policies that remained in the American military. The NAACP pronounced black military service as evidence of black civic-mindedness, arguing for an end to Jim Crow policies nationwide. America's continued racial restrictions on citizenship made it seem embarassingly equivalent to Nazi Germany. By 1952, all racial blocks to naturalization came to an end. America's entry into and triumph

in WWII was now presented as a victory over racial conflicts, showcasing national ideals of equality and liberation.

WWII and citizen whiteness

WWII's connection to the end of racial definitions of citizenship served to cast the second world war as the pivotal moment for racial progressivism in America. America was now, post WWII, presented as a multicultural bastion of freedom and liberality in popular culture and history, where white supremacy was replaced with racial liberalism. Racial liberalism redefined race as culture, and American culture now became, "perceived through wartime ideas of America as a universal nation and a model democracy" (Melamed 58). What Jodi Melamed calls the "privileged racial formation" (59) meant that "to be American is to occupy the place of the universal subject- for which whiteness was once the synecdoche" (59). Here, race itself disappears, and what is left is what is American- an abstract national subject, undergirded in whiteness. Any "racial and cultural deviations from an ideal national culture connotated negative deviations...grounds for legitimate exclusion of some from the wealth and freedoms presumed to be commonly available to all Americans" (Melamed 58-59). In other words, for the myth of American exceptionalism to continue, people of color must consent to either erasure or assimilation into the abstract national subject.

Language, Recruitment and Practice: World War II and military whiteness

What I identify as military whiteness surfaces both in systemic attempts to proclaim America a liberal nation state, and in practice of unequal training and recruitment policies. This is particularly pronounced in the WWII-era of racial liberalism, where the anxiety over the instability of American military identity surfaces in the

contradictory and purposefully evasive language of military decrees, recruitment policies and visual public representation. These written texts and products, with their implied national authority, pronounced the military as a more liberal, progressive space. In action, they produced segregated, racist, and unequal training and experiences for the black serviceperson in WWII.

When overt racial exclusionary policies of WWI met the necessity of bodies on the battlefield for WWII, military whiteness also moved in invisibility, through the language and weaponized literacies of war. WWII military recruitment was primarily run by draft and conscription. Over sixty percent of the serving troops were drafted, and around forty percent were volunteers at the height of the war. Of these numbers, around eight percent of the over twelve million serving (1945 numbers) were black (The National WWII museum). The Selective Service Act of 1940, which drafted the majority of military servicepersons for WWII, shows racial exclusion and inclusion as indicative of military whiteness in its dogmatic language. It argues for military draft on the basis that, "in a free society the obligations and privileges of military training and service should be shared generally in accordance with a fair and just system of selective compulsory military training and service". The language, largely ideological, promotes war and military service as both an "obligation and privilege" of citizenry. In recruitment, it specifies gender and age, "it shall be the duty of every male citizen of the United States, and of every male alien residing in the United States, who... is between the ages of twenty-one and thirty-six, to present himself for and submit to registration", but begins with the allowance, "except as otherwise provided in this Act." It mentions race only to dismiss its significance, "selection of men for training and service...shall be made in an

impartial manner, …..in the selection of men under this Act, there shall be no discrimination against any person on account of race or color" (Selective 885).

The very inclusion of the word "race" in the SSA of 1940 came only after continued lobbying from black activists and press for more equal recruitment and training of black soldiers since WWI. In 1940, Howard University's Rayford W. Logan, as chairman of the civilian Committee on Participation of Negros in the National Defense Program, testified to the necessity of including language that barred racial discrimination in both recruiting and training black servicemen (Lee 62) to do the same work as white servicepersons, not merely in menial support positions as they largely did in WWI. Senator Robert Wagner and Representative Hamilton Fish, both of New York, sponsored anti bias amendments (Murray 61). While the SSA passed with specific language including servicepersons of color, segregated facilities were still used in WWII recruiting. As black serviceperson numbers increased, so did the need for (and quickly, a shortage of) new housing, equipment, units, cadres, and officers, all in segregation. Disproportionately, black recruits were affected, as their separate facilities and training centers were not often ready for the troop expansion.

In this era of racial liberalism, whiteness is no longer just explicit supremacy. The language of the SSA, seeing only an abstract national subject as the military recruit, camouflages exactly such prejudice. It announces, "no man shall be inducted for training or service...unless he is acceptable to the land or naval forces...no men shall be inducted..until adequate provision shall be made for such shelter, sanitary facilities, water supplies...for such men, as may be determined by the Secretary of War ...as the case may be, to be essential to public and personal health" (886). This specific provision was often

evoked in WWII to defend quotas that restricted black military personnel, or sent them to segregated training camps or units, as appropriate for "public health". Black soldiers were refused entry into active duty units based on the lack of segregated training facilities, evoking the "acceptable" and "adequate provision" of the SSA. The language of the SSA thus worked systematically using neutral and default terms to serve as defense for national Jim Crow policies, while normalizing military whiteness as "acceptable", "impartial", a "duty" of every "male citizen."

The battle for wartime representation was a battle to be seen and accounted for as American citizens. The first call to arms by conscription during the Revolutionary War against the British asked for volunteers with weapons, specifically men who were able-bodied and owned property. By definition, this excluded black men, along with indentured servants, transients and women (Kestnbaum 11). Therefore, even before the advent of WWII, civil rights activists were clamoring for black representation and training in the Armed Forces, in all the branches. In previous wars, black servicemen were largely relegated to support positions, segregated from active duty work. In WWI, blacks volunteered or were drafted at a higher rate than others, but in 1940, the peacetime draft established a nine percent quota for black citizens, restricting their numbers (Phillips).

Whenever possible, the language of recruitment was used to regulate the numbers of black servicepersons required to maintain the function of warfare. Before the beginning of WWII, in 1931, to suggestions that the War Department open up recruitment of black servicemen for the Air Corps, the War Department replied that the Air Corps, "gathered in men of technical and mechanical experience and ability. As a

rule, the colored man has not been attracted to this field in the same way or to the same extent as the white man…" (Lee 56), as if they considered the black man a free agent, blaming his lack of interest. The language of this response elides over the reason why fewer black recruits were available, and categorizes defined Air Corps recruits blandly as "men of technical and mechanical experience and ability", avoiding any mention of race. Black recruits were supposedly unable to meet these requirements. This was despite the evidence that the War Department deliberately excluded black men from Air Corps service on the excuse of lack of available segregated training facilities in the government-run Air Corps Training Center. The early exclusion of black servicemen meant that they did not have an active presence in the Air Corps at all, and this was not evidence of their lack of interest, or their ability as a race.

Another method of black exclusion from military service was through literacy tests. While the military originally had no literacy requirements, complaints from white military leadership on black soldier illiteracy led to an Army requirement in 1941 that all recruits had to read and write at a fourth grade level. The first four months after this law adoption, twelve percent of black draftees were excluded, while only one percent of white draftees were excluded on the same basis. The Army General Classification Test (AGCT) was passed in 1943, and by the end of the year, more than sixty percent of black recruits were rejected, and a third of whites. Although the low scores of black recruits could be explained by poor educational access, and over eighty percent of black recruits who were offered remedial assistance through Army classes were brought up to standard, the low literacy scores, and subsequent rejection of so many black draftees, were used to justify the restriction or quotas of blacks from serving in the military (Murray 63-64). As

with the language of the SSA, these literacy tests did not "see" race, but supposedly qualifications of the abstract national subject. White here is not a raced subject, but a neutral national recruit.

As the black serviceman's presence was restricted inside the military, any visual memory of his service was equally muted. The dearth of black servicemen in the military was reflected visually in wartime media. While wartime propaganda promoted "V for Victory", black servicepersons were largely omitted from most visual propaganda. The Office of Wartime Information (OWI) downplayed racial discrimination in the military, but censored photographs of wounded black soldiers. When an increase in troop numbers was necessary, the OWI attempted a more positive visual narrative of the war to assist in recruiting black citizens. The OWI made Frank Capra's *The Negro Soldier,* a sanitized movie made to appeal to black audiences. Capra's movie, continuing his "Why we Fight" series, showcased some black military men, while avoiding any serious discussion of race problems in the military. Capra's film, and a few other wartime movies that represented black soldiers, showed black soldiers in a variety of positions like airmen or sailors, but elided over military racism or segregation. For instance, in the movie *Teamwork*, the narrative explains that white and black soldiers worked side by side, but the skillful editing neglects to show that the black soldiers were in segregated units, and the white men were officers. Internal military memos back up the dual purposes of this message: blacks would not be assigned complete credit for military operations, and it would avoid the criticism that black servicepersons were only assigned to service tasks (Garrett 77).

Often, these movies also used famous black stars like boxing champion Joe Louis to represent the American side of liberation and progress, against the Nazi propaganda of

racial difference and inferiority (Garrett). The government similarly also resorted to picking specific black men for public positions, like Major Campbell C. Johnson as executive assistant to General Hershey, Dr. Channing Tobias to the National Advisory Commission on Selective Service (Murray 66), and William Hastie as aide to Secretary of War Henry Stimson. At the same time, on the local level, southern states were largely excluding blacks from serving on Selective Service boards, and governors, who appointed local board members, refused to allow black members, who would have power over white draftees (Murray 66). The OWI also limited black press access to wartime information, by not granting credentials to black press to the frontlines of war until 1944. Subsequently, visual battlefield media representation of servicepersons of color was also limited. In response, readers of black magazines provided their own visual production, sending in their own pictures of their family members in service (Phillips). The subsequent "Double V" campaign by the black press and black activists, which recruited black support for both the war abroad and the war against Jim Crow, was also a reclaiming of the visual narrative of the war by black citizens.

Although WWII proclaimed America a progressive and liberal democracy, military whiteness demonstrated that racial liberalism meant that black troops were not seen or acknowledged on equal terms with white troops. Hegemonic authorship by the US government used the inclusion of racially liberal language, also channeled through visual representation, to 'see' the black serviceman in selective ways, and restrict his presence by quotas and to inferior positions. Thus it weaponized language and authorship to proclaim the military a liberal space, while continuing racially segregated and unequal practices.

The subsequent use and deployment of most black troops in WWII was purposely limited in scope. These limitations were both overt in practice and invisible to the public eye that saw only select examples of black citizen-soldiers as representative of progress. Black participation was thus muted and erased from public perception of the war. If their authorship was measured by their literacy, it was used to limit their role as citizen-soldiers. Clearly WWII military language of recruitment saw the recruited military servicemen, ones of "experience and ability", coded in neutral terms, and raced white. The black serviceperson's entrance into military service would be necessary to uphold the WWII narrative of liberation, but limited and often unrecognized. Their own resulting authorship would have to resist this obscured image while presenting their own conflicting reality of being a black citizen-soldier.

Military Whiteness in the 20/21st Century: advertising, career and recruitment

Since the end of the Vietnam War, and by President Nixon's sanction, the modern day military transitioned from a draft-based model to what was then called the Modern Volunteer Army (MVA), a move from a citizen's duty to a free market model. In an MVA or All-Volunteer Force (AVF) based model, the military's numbers depend on their success at recruiting specific kinds of citizens to join their service. Nixon's argument for an all volunteer military was both political and pragmatic, as it succeeded in undercutting the root of antiwar protests from campuses, while recasting the military as a competitive career choice for a select few (Bailey 51). Significantly, Nixon made the case against the draft on a "conservative, libertarian belief that liberty is the most central of American values" (Bailey 51). Internal army reports on the viability of the all-volunteer force suggested that efforts at recruiting through public service announcements be

replaced by full-on commercial recruitment and advertising, as benefits an economic model of the military. Early commercial advertising, at the height of anti-military sentiment from the Vietnam War, emphasized individuality and creativity from recruits rather than rules and codes. One early advertisement, from the 1970s, stated, "we care more about how you think, than how you cut your hair." The army advertising slogan was, "Today's Army wants to join you." (Bailey 60). Yet, concerns about an all-volunteer force persisted, like the worry that an AVF would be recruiting primarily poor and black military persons (Bailey), changing the visual representation and demographics of America's military.

The modern military's recruitment advertisements are the new form of hegemonic authorship, indicating what values America represents, and what kind of people are recruited into the military system. In the new era of colorblindness, advertisements specify values of the individual. While older advertising did not consistently encourage recruitment of minority troops, newer US military recruitment advertisements target people of color, promoting military values as color-blind, and mission-focused, a community built on camaraderie rather than difference. Like the WWII era, in the face of a shortage in recruiting numbers, US military advertising targeted a bigger recruitment pool, including minorities and women, by focusing on teamwork and inclusivity (Jester 10-11). The success of such efforts can be seen in the increasing number of minorities in active duty troops.

Post 9/11, military advertising has adjusted the recruiting pitch to include the WWII model based on sacrifice and country values, while continuing to emphasize the career angle (Bailey). America's now decades-long involvement in global zones of

warfare in the Middle East, labelled the "forever war", means that American military recruits, mirroring the population of the enemy, must also possess diverse language skills, and come from diverse populations. Although servicemembers in the US military are thus increasingly members of color, US military forces currently remain majority white. In 2019, over 30 percent of all American troops are servicepersons of color, and this number continues to grow as white troop numbers fall. As in WWII, today's military recruitment and military service embodies some of the cultural anxieties of a system of whiteness that is increasingly dependent on bodies of color.

After the terror attacks of 9/11, an increase in anti-immigrant and a rise in nationalism provided another opportunity for military recruitment of minorities. Communities of color that were targeted as sites of extremism and anti-American sentiment were eager to demonstrate a mandatory nationalism and allegiance to America through military service, much as earlier groups of black Americans or Japanese Americans did during WWII. Irene Garza (2015) examines how a Latinx-owned advertising firm and the Army had partnered up to recruit Latinx youth on the ideas of honor, patriotism and family with the "Yo Soy El Army/I am the Army" recruiting campaign. The emphasis of recruitment language and imagery on cultural translation and access, and a discourse of "penetrating barrios" reduces the role of the histories of segregation in military advertising, and puts the focus on individual and cultural messaging instead (Garza 250). While research strategies claim to provide understanding of communities of color and their connection to military values, these recruitment strategies are instead, "simultaneously mobilizing and muting Latina/o racial and cultural difference" (Garza 246) to meet recruitment numbers for the military.These recruitment

advertisements aim at bodies of color, while reinforcing the historical separatism of military life from civilian in its forward thinking and purpose.

Military advertising showcases a variety of contradicting value systems, proclaiming a new military that values diversity. Yet, in many ways, this 'new' military is composed of the old values: masculinity, state sponsored violence, token diversity, while it insists on its own universe of values and honor systems, outside of and superior to the civilian world. Increasingly, modern advertising for military recruitment relies on an esprit de corps, a communal military belonging, as an appeal to volunteers as a separate and more progressive reality than civilian life. Much of today's military advertising, post 9/11, continues to have a presupposition of masculinity, represented in advertising as risk, violence and weapons. The contradictions within these advertisements, and the military values that are simultaneously presented and subverted, such as presenting and rejecting risk or aggression, intend to recode the military as a progressive realm of differences. The message is purposefully obscure as," this presentation of armies as perhaps progressive enables an obfuscation of past and potential military violence, making it harder to critique the use of military force"(Jester 13). The new mix in military advertising showcases career goals, while emphasizing military values of honor and sacrifice for select branches and specialties. Research indicates that advertising aimed at reservists advocate the professional benefits of joining the military, such as job training and money for college. However, advertising aimed at active duty personnel overwhelmingly (over 70 percent) presented as transformational, an emotional approach that emphasizes appeals to identity of self and group (Park, Shoieb, Taylor 568).

In its recruitment and advertising, the military presents itself primarily as a progressive career-oriented space, suitable for citizens of color. The continual labeling of the military as a career-choice is a strategy that remains impervious to criticism, due to its supposedly egalitarian values. It is more accurate to label it a neoliberal reframing of institutional whiteness. The invisibility of whiteness is, "when whiteness does not speak its own name. At those times...whiteness may simply assume its own normativity. It may also refer to those times when neutrality or normativity is claimed for some kinds of whiteness, with whiteness frequently simultaneously linked to nationality" (Frankenburg 81). In a reframed narrative, the military as a profession is only concerned about individual advancement, where individual is coded as neutral and white. This deracinated, universal individual serviceperson signals the hidden whiteness in the system, through his/her recruitment and buy-in of the military "warrior ethos", a mindset that puts national service before individual realities. Military whiteness, positioned here as career choice, is also predicated on the recruitment of bodies of color to signal these supposed national values such as diversity and multiculturalism, and promises them benefits of citizenship and belonging (benefits that are inconsistently provided) through their service.

To enter military life, all recruits have to take the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB), a multiple choice exam, and the recruit's resulting score, the Armed Forces Qualifying Test (AFQT) results, will determine what branch and occupation the enlisted member is assigned. The use of a standardized exam, largely based on reading and mathematical skills, and the fact that many of these exams are administered on school sites, positions the military not as a civic duty but as another

career choice. Much like other careers, the military also offers on-job training, tuition reimbursement, medical plans, and other employee benefits. Military service as employment also emphasizes a view of military personnel as professionally trained and specialized recruits, necessitating qualified and competitive candidates or professionals. It seems to not emphasize body or color, but a monolithic set of professional standards, one collective corporate culture, with its own social rules and gatekeepers. It can also be argued that defining military service as a profession can mean an ease of transition to civilian life, where military employment and skills can be adapted and applied in a civilian marketplace post-service.

However, in crucial ways, the military is unlike other career options. Department of Defense surveys of American youth indicate that many recruit with the military not only for vocational possibilities, but institutional (desire to serve, patriotism, desire for challenge), because they are future-oriented (a future military career), and monetary (ability to pay off bills, get an enlistment bonus or student loans) (Eighmey). The military across branches also installs the so-called warrior ethos, which "emphasizes placing the mission above all else, not accepting defeat, not ever quitting, and not ever leaving behind another American" (Redmond et. al, 14). Military recruits only make up less than one percent of the general American population, and this means that deployment-related stressors and illnesses such as post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and traumatic brain injury (TBI) are not commonly understood by the general population. When military servicepersons exit the military life, transitioning to civilian life will prove difficult because of lack of viable civilian employment networks, and the necessity and difficulty of transitioning and translating a military resume into a civilian one. Many military skills

considered invaluable on the battlefield, particularly in the infantry branch, will prove ineffectual and misunderstood by the civilian employment arena. The reality of transferable skills can therefore be contested, and the increasing rate of suicide and post-service violence, trauma and substance abuse among veterans makes it clear that military professional life is not simply a matter of capitalist goals and corporate workplace culture.

The push to view military service as a profession, separate from civilian life, cannot undo the reality that the military-civilian divide is largely a socially manufactured one rather than a prescribed necessity. From its beginnings as a nation, the Founding Fathers made it clear that the military enterprise was reliant on civilian control and authority. The control over military troops was divided over all three branches of government (the President, a civilian, serving as Commander-in-chief). Specifically, "the framers of the Constitution...preserved a separate citizen-soldier militia to ensure civilian control of the military necessary for liberty, and to avoid reliance on a professional military which they knew to be different from, and a threat to, society" (Feaver and Kohn 2).

I argue that the view of the military as a profession is merely a desire to close the doors on military work to civilian critique, and cement the military-civilian divide. It presents the profession of military service as an enclosed event, experience and stage, a situation where its "corporate" culture is ill-understood outside its gates. When issues of inequality and justice arise, as in the case of Don't Ask, Don't Tell (DADT), segregational policies, sexual assault reporting, and others, it is dealt with in-house, with very limited civilian input. As such, it would appear that social issues of concern that

arise in the military often do not merit civilian attention because they seem peculiar to the life of military service, and understood only by its experts, its foot soldiers, its chain of command. If incidents of inequality or social injustice exist, they are often dismissed as outliers from the profession of state-sponsored warfare. As the national agenda is prioritized, individual concerns about inequalities are dismissed or devalued as contrary to the group ethos.

After a white supremacist rally in Charlottesville VA, in August of 2017, President Trump commented that there were "good people on both sides." Around the same time, Defense Secretary Gen. Jim Mattis, the top military leader at the time, spoke in front of U.S. troops in Jordan, addressing the growing public furor over Trump's comments, saying, "you're a great example for our country right now, and it's got problems. It's got problems we don't have in the military and you just hold the line, my fine young soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines — you just hold the line until our country gets back to understanding and respecting each other and showing it" (NPR). Mattis' message was clear- what problems exist within the civilian world are not consistent with military culture and practice. In Mattis' articulated viewpoint, it is the deracinated military servicepersons who "hold the line " on american values of progress, equality and freedom, and the separate, civilian world, that does not. This, of course, completely discounts the increasing reports of white supremacy and its allegiants within military ranks, which mirrors a similar movement in civilian life. It also requires that servicepersons of color, despite their individual experiential realities in this matter, uphold the party line about military unity and progressiveness. Indeed, holding this line can mean they are supposedly exempt from these trials of civilian society.

Unconvincingly, this narrative implies a military built on utopian ideals of brotherhood and unity, as separate and distinct from civilian values. Instead, the presence of military whiteness in this deracinated view of all soldiers as abstract national subjects, and the subsequent inequalities faced by servicemembers of color, indicate that military service extends, not excludes, civilian values and inequalities.

While the modern military presents itself in recruitment advertising as progressive, individual and career oriented, these are newer values of neoliberal whiteness transposed on the old: career in place of country, individual in place of white. Simultaneously, military service's unique qualifiers: patriotism via national service, and civic duty, now hidden under the language and trappings of employment, are still attractive to those who are recruited for military service. The growing numbers of recruits of color, particularly in combat-related troops, indicate that military service's siren call as career choice affects Americans of color who are looking for belonging and claim to citizenship, both legal and cultural. It also demonstrates that the problems of whiteness that plagues citizenship have not gone away in the 21st century's colorblind era.

Recruitment of Servicepersons of Color

The recruitment of able-bodied people of color, while meeting demand, is thus both necessary, and destabilizing. Citizenship is increasingly used as a recruiting tool for minorities, where legal citizenship is offered to recruits willing to commit to military service, but also withdrawn from them at will. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) under President Bush mandated recruiter access at public high schools if they wanted federal funding. The largest viable pool of recruits are high schoolers without plans for higher education. The Delayed Entry Program (DEP) targets people under the age of 18

as viable recruits, even offering them money and an increase in rank for providing additional contacts who would be interested in signing up for military service. Originally targeting black American highschoolers, DEP began to recruit from the Latinx population when the black recruitment rates began to decline.The increase in recruitment among Latinx, particularly high schoolers in Los Angeles, means that it is highly likely that illegal immigrants too have been recruited, and have served in the American military. Anecdotal evidence suggests that recruiters have instructed potential recruits to lie about their city of origin (labeling an American city) in order to be accepted (Davis 34).The most public case of an illegal immigrant serving is that of Pvt. Jose Gutierrez, one of the first members of the US troops to die in the Iraq invasion. He was granted citizenship posthumously, with little public attention given to his immigration status. Although the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) grants expedited citizenship to recruits that are not citizens, it has to be shown to be of "vital national interest", and has not prevented US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) from deporting military personnel that do not have green cards or citizenship.

The same contradictory view of military service and citizenship has affected other recruits of color considered vital to military success overseas. After the terror attacks of September 11, 2001, the American military, in 2008, began the Military Accessions Vital to National Interest (MAVNI) program. MAVNI allowed the US military to recruit people of specific skill sets, such as language, which were necessary for military operations across the world. Many of these recruits were people of color, from Middle Eastern or South Asian descent. Under President Obama, the MAVNI program was also extended to include Latinx recruits from Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals

(DACA) (Chishti, Rose and Yale-Loehr). In return for their service, servicepersons under MAVNI would be granted fast-track American citizenship. The MAVNI program had been suspended once, after a terror attack by a Muslim serviceman at Ft. Hood, Texas, and since then, been stymied with increased security checks, and random dismissals of recruits without clear reasoning. Despite a study indicating that MAVNI recruits performed higher on Army tests, had higher levels of education, and characteristics associated with better performance than other recruits, in 2018, over a thousand recruits have been prevented from completing the program, and will likely be dismissed from their contracts without explanation. Their subsequent citizen status will remain in jeopardy.

The morally questionable national recruiting and muting of servicemembers of color have been answered in authorship by the servicepersons themselves, efforts at placing themselves inside the national narrative. In the following chapters, I consider the works of asymmetrical authorship of three black WWII servicemen and veterans: Romare Bearden, abstract expressionist artist, Masood Ali Warren, sculptor, and John Henrik Clarke, Africana Studies founder and academic. My consideration of military personnel's acts of composing are an examination of what I consider authoring, acts of critical cultural citizenship. For these soldier-citizens, they are records of soldier letters and mentoring, sketchbook renderings, letter sketches and private musings, and an art series post-service. In the acknowledged realms of civilian fields of study, the products of these three servicepersons are notably seen as abstract expressionist paintings (Bearden), sculptures of black American heroes (Warren), Africana studies (Clarke). Their soldier letters and mentoring, sketchbook renderings, sketches and private musings, what I see as

acts of critical cultural citizenship, are archived as part of historical biographical records, but unrecognized as part of the military/civilian connection to their future career paths, or as authorial renderings of the effects of the inequalities of their military service. These three servicemen's works showcase three different types of asymmetrical authorship as critical cultural citizenship ("challenging the universal", the "right to look" and the "missing pages"), in effect reinserting the narrative of servicepersons of color into the narrative of WWII's Greatest Generation. As excavations of asymmetrical authorship, they are records that demonstrate that the military/civilian divide functions to separate and erase records of the tensions of citizenship for people of color in American national service.

Most significantly, this authorship demonstrates that military service, and the study of the authoring of military veterans in connection to service, has profound implications for the archives and study of authorship. It demonstrates that the military/civilian divide is much more porous than it seems. The far reaching effect of military whiteness is a sanitization of military experience in the civilian realm as heroic and honorable, which eclipses and mutes the contradictory realities of most servicepersons. The movement of military experience into civilian realms through authorship also indicates that military service cannot be left behind or dismissed as the corporate culture of a professional warrior class, but must rather be seen as an outreach of inherently unequal national American values of belonging and citizenship.

Chapter Two: Challenging the Universal: critical cultural citizenship in the artwork of Romare Bearden

"It was setting up what to me was a false premise—that there is such a thing distinctively in this country as a Negro art. I don't think so. I think you have a certain kind of American experience, be it an experience as a Negro in America, but it is an American experience."

Structural inequalities and racism of Jim Crow policies during the WWII era, for black servicepersons, meant that military service was a conflicting arena for exercising black cultural citizenship. The draft during WWII made the experience of military service a common one for many black Americans. Subsequently, biographies of important cultural figures like the artist Romare Bearden often note military service as one of many minor biographical details, but one that did not actively shape or influence his artistic growth and development. Thus, while Bearden's status as an established mainstream artist is well documented, critical literature has not addressed his brief role as a member of the US military, or traced any connections between his service and his subsequent artistic production. In my narrative, Bearden's claiming of universal values, and its conflict with his experiences in military service, hitherto not critically examined, proves important in shaping his artistic evolution from an artist in the social realist lens to a more abstract expressionist one.

This chapter grapples with how American identity is defined for people of color, and how they compose their own understanding of their belonging inside America. WWII is often positioned as a heroic narrative of resilience in the face of adversity (both

overseas and domestic). WWII's realities, however, as evidenced by the service and subsequent artistic production of black soldiers like Romare Bearden, trouble these easy myths by traveling on parallel and contradictory paths, a "no man's land" of military service. For black soldiers during WWII, both inside and outside military life, WWII service was fraught with the tensions of the American ideology of freedom and liberation, colliding with the American realities of Jim Crow and systemic racism. One did not cancel the other, but rather existed in tandem. To interrogate what this reality meant for black subjects, I examine their works of production, their authorship. Yet even this proves troubled, as military service structurally reduces soldier-citizens to abstract national subjects, muting the soldier's individual voice and agency in deference to the national agenda. In this realm, authorship will be an asymmetrical reckoning with hegemony, a writing back that leaves traces, ebbs and flows, rather than explicit counter-culture productions. I am delineating these asymmetrical authorship strategies under institutionalized racism to reassemble an archive of authorship linked to both military and civilian life through the work of Romare Bearden.

Romare Bearden's theorizing of the importance of universal values in art and his eventual encounter with the racial inequalities of war service are the building blocks of his asymmetrical authorship, rooted in contradictory experiences and ideals. Bearden's wartime and post-service letters, essays and visual elements of his first art show, *Passion of the Christ*, contain elements of both the "universal", or deracinated whiteness, and references to Jim Crow realities he faced in the American military. The combination of these two contradictory modes is what I see as Bearden's critical cultural citizenship, which largely showcases his experiences with racial tensions in the military. I argue that

this contradictory authorship, both a claiming of the universal and a revoking of the same, is asymmetrical authorship, residuals of the effects of military service for the black citizen soldier.

Bearden's critical cultural citizenship

Bearden's asymmetrical authorship, surfacing in his post-war authorial renderings as an archive of contradictory thought and recordings of black life, are examples of critical cultural citizenship. As I have defined elsewhere, critical cultural citizenship is a collection of cultural practices that challenge black national belonging while within the national apparatus, here, through the vehicle of military service. It surfaces where black citizens are not granted the agency or the rights of full citizenship, when they are muted or repurposed, while they serve the very country that erases their realities. Bearden's authorship, built in contradiction, can be seen as critical cultural citizenship, which highlights the inequalities inherent in military whiteness, and by extension, the American identity. As such, it is a challenge to cultural citizenship's traditional role in claiming citizenship on the basis of democratic participation. Bearden's military service, a required endeavor for male citizens during WWII, *furthered* his sense of alienation and reinforced his paradoxical position as both a black man and an American citizen-soldier. As such, his authorship, built in contradiction, can be seen as critical cultural citizenship, which works to highlight inequalities, in this case, ones that are inherent in military whiteness, and by extension, the American identity.

Romare Bearden's relatively privileged upbringing, his youthful exposure to black intellectual figures, his educational experience and friendships with white and black artists, makes him an apt example of black intellectualism and artistry in the 1930s and

40s. However, Bearden's art and letters contain a hidden narrative about the tenuous nature of his national belonging during and after his military service. Bearden's collision course with the forces of black inequality happened dramatically inside the American military, and I argue that it shows up inside his subsequent post-WWII writings and artwork in asymmetrical authorship. I argue that Bearden's continual claiming of the "universal", the supposed ideals and aesthetics of formal art which transcends cultural specificity, is disrupted by his military experience of "no man's land." Bearden's initial intellectualizing of what he called the "Negro artist's dilemma", evolves into a indirect reckoning with military whiteness and black material realities through icons in his first major art show, "Passion of the Christ". Taken together, I see asymmetrical authorship in the contradiction between Bearden's writings and his emphasis on artistic formal elements and "universal values." This is showcased in Bearden's first post-war art show, an artistic evolution from social realism to abstract expressionism. While Bearden, in his writing, lauded true artistic values as "universal" ones that transcend American regionalism, his post-warfare art showcases specific elements that continue to demonstrate specific, material realities of black life in the fissures and tensions between what he professed, and what he experienced in the military.

Bearden's background

Bearden (1911-1988) was a prominent artist with a long career in mixed media, and is today best-known for his work in collage, from the 1960s to the early 70s. A prolific visual artist, composer and writer, he also designed costumes and sets for the Alvin Ailey Dance Theater and worked in music composition. Although Bearden began his art in social realism, his artwork continually drew from what he considered universal

values found in European abstract art and Neo-African images. Bearden's visual works are in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, MoMA, the Philadelphia Museum of Arts, and he has had retrospectives in the Mint Museum of Art, the Detroit Institute of Arts, and the National Gallery of Art in Washington.

Born in Charlotte, North Carolina, Bearden and his family, as part of the Great Migration, moved to Harlem, New York in his youth where he spent most of his adult life. Bearden completed his Bachelors at New York University, but in the field of Education. He simultaneously attended the Art Students League to study under George Grosz, a social realist painter from Germany. Bearden was employed as a social worker with the New York Department of Social Services, and worked on his art on weekends and nights, until the 1960s, when he resigned to work on art full-time.

Other researchers have already established Bearden's influences from this institutional learning, and its traces in his artwork (Fine). I argue that what came next for Bearden was particularly significant in producing a counter-narrative of WWII for black citizens. Bearden joined the military, and served in the segregated, all black, 372 Infantry Division, from 1942-1945. A segregated division, they were never sent overseas, but moved from Fort Dix, New Jersey to Harlem, NY to guard NYC subways from sabotage. Bearden's military record shows his civilian position at the time of the draft as part of "social and welfare workers", since Bearden was working for NY Social Services at the time. Bearden's level of education meant that he was qualified for officer candidacy. However, very few black men were given the chance to train to be officers, and if trained, the military would not put them in charge of white enlisted soldiers. Nonetheless,

Bearden was sent to Officer's Candidate School (OCS) in Camp Davis, North Carolina, and was a sergeant by the end of his military career in 1945.

By the time that Bearden was drafted into the military life, he had already done one solo art show, and had committed to his dual life as a case worker and artist. He had his first art studio on 33 West 125th Street in New York. His upbringing and subsequent friendships and mentorships had given him a solid intellectual foundation on black experience in America, and in the art world, where he easily transitioned between white and black contemporaries. However, military life proved a different matter.

Bearden and the black literati

Romare Bearden's childhood was remarkably unusual, and primed him for a launch into the arts. Both of his parents were college-educated, and his mother, Bessye, was a social and political activist and a correspondent for *The Chicago Defender*, a prominent black American newspaper. In the Bearden home in New York, their circle of friends included famous names of the Harlem Renaissance, among whom were the writers Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen and George Schuyler, actor/activist Paul Robeson, and famously, W.E.B. DuBois (Fine 6-7). DuBois' influential idea of the "talented tenth", or the importance of black intellectuals to further the social progress of blacks in society, had its markings in Bearden's own intellectual, and material reality of a middle-class existence, in his home. Critics see DuBois' ideas about black art in Bearden's future pursuits, the idea that black art must be eternal, outliving the artist and his material realities (Kirschke). At a young age, Bearden encountered and belonged to a complex tradition of intellectual and artistic thought, one rooted in the nuances of black American experience.

In college, Bearden worked on political cartoons in his school newspaper. Bearden's college cartooning later led to his cartooning work for DuBois' *The Crisis*, *Afro-American*, *Chicago Defender* and other black periodicals. His cartooning work, unlike many of his post-WWII artworks, was explicitly political. It was mainly his work with George Grosz, a German artist at ASL, that prompted his interest in socially engaged art. He also credited Grosz's influence with introducing him to the works of other draftsmen like William Hogarth. Bearden's political cartoons followed a Grosz-type of explicit commentary, but on racial topics such as the Scottsboro trials, the rise of Adolf Hitler, KKK, anti-lynching legislation and others (Fine 8). Bearden's lifelong friend and cousin by marriage, Charles Henry Alston, was also an illustrator and painter, who, in 1936, became the first black administrator of the Works Progress Administration's Federal Art Project. Bearden spent time at Alston's studio at 306 West 141st Street, with other black artists and luminaries like Ralph Ellison, Norman Lewis and Jacob Lawrence, who were working through the social realist lens in their art. It was at Alston's studio that Bearden had his first solo show in 1940. Grosz's dual identity as German and American (making his faculty position at ASL a controversial choice in the WWII era), and DuBois' famous definition of the black man's "double consciousness", are both marked in Bearden's life and art of this time period as black man and artist. Bearden's friendship with like-minded artists, both black and white, shaped his art, and explains his interest in universal representations. Simultaneously, both Grosz's and DuBois' own works were rooted in their material experiences of culture and identity. Bearden's own lifelong work was a similar attempt at reckoning with both his blackness

and his Americanness. But how black art was defined and seen, a contested topic in the art world, also had to come into the equation.

Visual culture and black art in the 1930s and 40s

Social realism, a global movement in visual art and literature during the 1920s and 30s, focused on realistic images of dispossessed and disenfranchised people of the world, representing their material realities. Although the Great Depression affected both white and black citizens (and affected black people in the South disproportionately), artistic treatment of and inclusion of black bodies and black artists in visual art was limited, or even erased. This dismissive institutional treatment of black bodies and black artistry, which did not 'see' it on equal terms with white art, is standard for the whiteness of the racial liberalism era, concerned about "universal" values of humanity, individuals, and nation, presenting as progress, while eliding over experiential realities of marginalized citizens like black Americans. Rather than simply distillations of artist bias, social realism was an expression of the decade that thought itself adaptable in the face of adversity, "The 1930s called for a reexamination of American culture and values-a rethinking of the meaning of democracy-and prompted new forms of articulating this American dilemma. What the Depression brought to the arts in the 1930s was a reassessment of what it means to be American and how to express that aesthetically" (Barter 13). If so, mid-western natural scenes by regionalist painters, with their romanticized renderings of farm life, painted an America without blacks as equal citizens- a continued national narrative rather than a disruption to white supremacy's norms.

Much of black art, meanwhile, was denied representation in mainstream museums. Black art did however benefit from sponsorship by government programs like the Works Progress Administration (WPA), which discouraged any leftist expression, but provided monetary support for artists. Similarly, the Harmon and Rosenwald foundations, along with regional support from historically black colleges and universities, meant that black art, in the form of murals, paintings, graphic arts, and literary forms like novels and poetry, found a form of expression of racial realities in the 1930s and 40s (Morgan). This specific form of black art represented in the public forum was sponsored because it fit American ideals of integration and assimilation of the 1930s and 40s, a form of institutional whiteness. Scholars like Laurence P. Jackson have argued that it took black writers and critics outside mainstream aesthetics of racial liberalism (exemplified by writers like Langston Hughes, Richard Wright, James Baldwin and Ann Petry who found public recognition) like poet Sterling Brown and writer Chester Himes, to critique and "prepare the ground for the militant writers of the 1960s" (11). Sponsored black art in the 1930s and 40s then, often reinforced the system of whiteness by providing it the black participation it needed to make the case for a liberal system. Black art that showcased social class issues, migrant workers, capitalistic American exploitation, like in the work of muralist Charles White, was sponsored by the WPA because it presented black art in specific ways as part of the American narrative of progress, within specific public settings meant to compartmentalize black art. White's most famous work for instance, the mural called "The Contribution of the Negro to Democracy in America" was made in 1943, on the walls of the historically black college, Hampton University, presenting modern and folk heroes of black participation in America, like the folk singer Leadbelly

alongside black Union soldiers. White's resulting fame dimmed over the years, according to critics, because figurative art went out of style. However, it is also because black art was not promoted or endorsed at the level of white art across time (Miller).

In terms of black bodily representation in mainstream white artwork, social realist art included black people in specifically racial and monolithic ways, often as stock figures in lynching, plantation, or manual labor scenes, if at all. White painters such as Thomas Benton, Grant Wood, Edward Hopper and others often omitted black figures in their art except as stock labor figures, or in the case of Benton's much-critiqued representations of black laborers and lynched subjects, caricatures. Austen Bailly posits that Benton for instance, altered his earlier critical style to now reflect the perceived audience of art, "After 1928, Benton largely abandoned efforts to critique racial inequities viscerally in favor of picturing black and Native Americans in non-threatening ways for a majority white audience. He came to accept, but tried to mitigate, a persistent national racial divide through visual representation"(165). Artists omitting black figures rendered an America that was untroubled of national tensions or regional difficulties such as Jim Crow. Benton's change in style reflected the institutional whiteness in the art world itself, as "the definitions of what is 'beautiful, natural, and legitimate' have excluded African Americans" (Cooks 7).

Already excluded from most places of art study in institutional space in the 1920s and 30s, black artists were also largely excluded from artistic showings in museums. Curation of black art in museums in the 1930s followed what Bridget Cooks labels "the anthropological approach", which "reflects an institutional curiosity concerning the presence of racial otherness, commonly coupled with a desire to perpetuate the

superiority of mainstream White culture through its contrast to a Black difference defined as inherently inferior" (1). If they had institutional sponsorship, black art was exoticized to be considered legitimate, "museums sometimes showed Negro art with African sculpture to justify the exhibition of Negro artists by connecting them with pre-modern cultures" (Cooks 11). The exhibition of Jacob Lawrence's *Migration* series at New York's Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) was a rare example of a black artist receiving a major museum's acceptance, but that came with a presumption as his work, "fulfilled the competing desires for the role of Negro art in museums to be both perpetually primitive and contemporary. Lawrence's folk art aesthetic appealed to the 1930s and '40s interest in Negro Americans as "modern primitive" people, and the folksy quality of his simplified forms and palette connected with American Scene painting" (Cooks 51). In the biographical notes for the promotion of the show, Lawrence is lauded for his WWII service, connecting Lawrence's blackness and Americanness in order to validate the seriousness of American art on the global scene (Cooks).

In the visual culture of the 30s and 40s, a spectator/creator dissonance was apparent. It is clear that art followed not only from national movements, artistic motivations and social concerns, but also from racial liberalism that still "saw" America as largely monolithic and white. Black art, and black artists, with an accepted white audience, ones who can be easily categorized or reduced to exoticism or primitivism, were acknowledged, or seen, as art. The black subject's token Americanness, exemplified through military service, made his art palatable. Simultaneously, black bodies in social realism artworks had to either fit a preconceived stereotype of the suffering

worker/laborer, or not exist at all. This form of erasure and/or marginalization were markers of institutional whiteness in the art world.

Bearden and Social Realism

Bearden's own paintings from the 1930s such as *Soup Kitchen(1937)*, *The Family* (1941), *The Visitation (1941)*, also worked within the imagery and motifs of social realism. In *Soup Kitchen* Bearden uses earth tones, as in other paintings from the time, as metallic pigments were in restricted supply due to war priorities (Fine 13). It is a realistic portrayal of three male figures over a steaming soup pot, reflective of Depression-era social programs or situations. The figures appear racially ambiguous, although darker in skin tone, and the viewer's eye is drawn to the white steam lines from the soup pot rather than the faces of the three men. Like many of his other paintings from this time period, Bearden uses oil on brown paper, on a large scale (some measuring at 48 x 32 inches), prompting critics to draw connections between his work and Jacob Lawrence's (Fine 11).

At first sight, like other social realist paintings, Bearden's *Soup Kitchen* also focuses on genre scenes and reproduces it realistically. However, the contradiction between the racially ambiguous anonymity of the suffering figures and the large scale of Bearden's work is of particular interest when connected to his title, "Soup Kitchen" which draws the viewers to consider the larger context of the setting and its poverty, rather than the men. According to Bearden, "artists...don't necessarily paint or sculpt what they actually see...they try to come to terms with their feelings about such things" (160). In his thinking, the Great Depression had brought together black and white artists in one cause, a political and aesthetic involvement. At the same time, he was part of the

group of black artists in the 1930s who were continuing what was, "an existing tradition of a community-oriented art among black people here in the United States" (Bearden 161). Bearden focuses on the individual artist's emotional connection to social context, and uses racially ambiguous figures to do so to argue for universality in these moves.

His subsequent paintings from this era, such as *The Family* (1941), *The Visitation (1941)* are more experimental in nature, particularly in his use of flattened figures and shapes in portraits, and in his reference to Christian imagery and stories. Many of his figures now also visually read as black, darker in skin tone than Bearden himself, and are often in black families. *The Visitation* has two women meeting, hands clasped, an illustration of the visit between Mary, the mother of Jesus, and her cousin Elizabeth. *The Family* shows a father, mother and child, the Father's expansive hand palm out in gesture, in the center of the space. Bearden is now using shadow, variations in color, and in the case of *The Family,* layering of contrasting colors in portraits that are more geometric shape than natural contours, reflecting traces of artists like Picasso, or African sculptural influences (Fine 13). Bearden's mix of black American domestic experience converse with artistic values of European and African art in these works, in ways that he hoped would transcend the work of other black art, and their emphasis on regionalism over aesthetic concerns.

Bearden's early works thus show the conflicting approach of an attempt at universal artistic concerns, and the subjective realities of black artists in the 1930s. The root of this conflict is the system of whiteness that the "universal" represents, where if the black subject is 'seen', it is in terms of his/her race, while white artists would be seen as neutral subjects, naturally superior by ability. As Ian López defines it, "race is the

construction of relationships. It is in the elaboration of these relationships- invariably relationships of domination and subordination, normativity and marginality, privilege and disadvantage- that white identity is given content" (165). As such, Bearden's work could not escape comparisons to, or categorization based on, other black or white artists. What he saw as artistic attempts at tapping into humanistic values that transcended American black experience was instead a claiming of universality, coded whiteness. Underling Bearden's social realist works is exactly this conflict between Bearden's two concerns, what Ruth Fine calls a "dialectical tension between abstraction and representation"(13).

Bearden's writings indicate that his focus was more expansive than one art movement, as he explained in his statement for his first solo show, his belief was that good paintings should have, "a communion of belief and desire between artist and spectator" (Bearden qtd in Fine 11). Bearden's foray outside social realism thus begins with a desire to establish what good paintings are, a supposedly objective definition, and identify a common thread between both the creator and the audience. It also shows Bearden's desire to define blackness inside a largely white art world, in ways that read as authentic and true, a problematic endeavor in a system that erases or infantilizes blackness. So while we can read Bearden's social realist works as the beginnings of his move into what he considered "universal" values of a focus on form in art, his paintings from the 1930s and 40s still remain couched as social critique or commentary of black reality inside whiteness.

Bearden's art theory

Bearden's restlessness inside the social realist movement was further crystallized in his authorship from this period, where he criticizes institutional whiteness in its overt

forms. In 1934, Bearden wrote an essay on art titled, “The Negro Artist and Modern Art”, in which he was critical of the Harmon Foundation, a foundation that supported black arts. Again his view maintains that the problem was a formal concern rather than a social one. He asserted that most black art selected for Harmon sponsored shows were underdeveloped and derivative of European masters rather than paintings of black realities. Bearden refused to work with the Harmon Foundation, criticizing their involvement as “patronizing” and “coddling” derivative black art and exhibiting artists before they had mastered their skills. In Bearden’s view, Harmon was thus promoting the message that black art was culturally and formally backward, “A concrete example of the example of the accepted attitude towards the Negro artist recently occurred in California where an exhibition coupled the work of Negro artists with that of the blind” (141).

Here, Bearden affirms that black art supported and paid for by institutions can thus be stilted, deformed, or even inauthentic. However, he continues to emphasize the “universal values” of art, while critical of racist ideas and patronage in the art world. This contradiction is itself symptomatic of institutional whiteness. The selective sponsorship of black art, which Bearden boldly boycotts in one form, was happening on a larger, more subtle scale in mainstream culture. There, black art was excluded and unseen, because it did not fit into what was coded as art with “universal ideals”. Publicly accepted mainstream art was realistically art by white artists. For instance, a 1929 exhibition of black art, “An Exhibition of Paintings and Sculpture by American Negro Artists”, including the work of Charles White, was exhibited at the National Gallery of Art as one of its first black artist collections. However, it was placed in the foyer of the museum, and what should have been “poised to potentially disrupt the racially exclusive narrative

of American art", was "separated by its informal placement from the exhibition galleries, and its art was signified as unequal and lesser" (Cooks 20-21). Black American art was rooted in the black American experience, but censored, often unsponsored, and therefore not seen on its own terms.

Bearden himself was at times an unwitting agent of this oppression. He echoes the sentiments of institutional whiteness in visual art culture when he says, "The artist must be the medium through which humanity expresses itself. In this sense the greatest artists have faced the realities of life, and have been profoundly social" (141). In Bearden's telling, the Masters in art, such as Matisse, Picasso and others, achieved success through a mastery of form, and thus effectively communicated "human" realities, which in his reading, were not simply rooted in regionalism. Bearden might have seen his voicing of the necessity of formal concerns for black art as at odds with the societal milieu of the 1930s and 40s of social realism, but black art's problem was not merely about technical skill, but an institutional refusal to see black art at the same level as white art.

Bearden's view was more appropriately in line with what whiteness looked like in visual culture and art over time: disavowing the focus on racial realities in America, and supposedly concerned with more 'universal' modes instead: form, message and aesthetic. I argue that Bearden's move of universal aesthetics is an intellectual sidestepping of the spectator/artist dissonance. In his view, this conflict between spectator and artist puts the onus on the artist, and thus could be solved with a focus on artistic training in formal concerns in art. This, in Bearden's reasoning, would align the black artist's work with the white spectator on universal terms. While acknowledging the effects of American

institutional racism, Bearden continues to bear arms for art as a reflection of appropriate institutional learning and patronage.

The "artist", much like the "soldier", in Bearden's telling, is a raceless entity beholden mainly to ideals and values. However, in Jim Crow America, the material realities of black artists tie them to their art in numerous ways, particularly through deracinated values of institutional whiteness. Thus, Bearden's focus on black art "compatible" with the black artist that simultaneously had "values that are permanent and relevant to all men" (Bearden qtd in Campbell 527) was essentially impossible to achieve in the 1930s and 40s. This chapter will focus on Bearden's navigations of this uneven terrain.

The symptoms of no man's land

Bearden's time in the military, I argue, had a curious effect on his artistic theory's subsequent connections to his art. His military service produced fissures between what he intellectualized as the black artist's "dilemma", the "universal", and his own experiences with the no man's land of military service for the black citizen. This leads to his efforts at critical cultural citizenship, a challenge to the universal.

Bearden's time in WWII service was a difficult one by any terms. Like many black soldiers, Bearden was excluded from serving overseas. Since he served stateside, he had no respite from American civilian racial and segregational inequalities. Officer Candidate School was in the south, and all facilities were segregated from the canteens to transportation, as well as their parades or church services. In officer training, black candidates were housed separately from white candidates (Borei). Leaving the base in the south was a dangerous act for a black soldier, as many black soldiers were subjected to

racial violence. The effects of Jim Crow were probably heightened for Bearden, who, despite spending part of his childhood in Charlotte, NC, had both black and white friends and mentors in New York, and had participated in an art community that communicated values of egalitarianism.

Although his eventual service was stateside, in Harlem, New York, which meant that he still had time to see shows at museums, he notes in letters that, "there is no chance however to do any painting" ("Walter Quirt Papers, Archives of American Art). In other letters home, he notes his frustration at feeling unproductive, "more and more I feel the desire to paint, the rest at first was good and I was making adjustments to a new life but now it is just drudgery" ("Walter Quirt Papers", Archives of American Art). In a letter to art dealer Caresse Crosby, he says that most of his fellow soldiers considered him "nuts" because of his paintings, which he even felt might even get him a discharge from the army if he showed them to the army psychiatrist (Bearden qtd in Hamalian 139). His letters home during his time in the military continually note his frustration and alienation, which leads to his questioning of his artistic vision and product.

It is my contention that Bearden's military service put him the unusual arena of what I call "no man's land": an in-between place of being for the black citizen soldier at the time of Jim Crow in WWII. Despite being a black man in a national body of war, he is drafted into an ideological war for liberation, WWII, as the abstract universal subject, the deracinated American soldier. The language of the draft referred to him only as a "male citizen". However, army training and local Jim Crow practices placed him in segregated troops. Thus, he remains rooted in his material reality as a black man in an unequal domestic society. This doubling of bodily identity, both national subject and

object, creates a "no man's land", a constantly shifting space, where Bearden's individual identity and work become unregistered or submerged within the national agenda.

Bearden's reaction to this elision is multifaceted. One clear indicator is his subtle rejection of the impact of military service, by continuing to focus on his art while serving, and distancing himself from national service and its heroic branding on soldiers that served. Much of his written correspondence from his army life focused on his alienation inside the national machine. Aside from the G.I. Bill, which paid for Bearden's eventual trip for artistic inspiration to Europe, Bearden hardly ever explicitly referenced his military service in specific terms in his art after his service ended. In this manner, reminiscent of today's post-9/11 "stealth" veterans, Bearden wanted to put his service behind him as a static moment of unproductivity, rather than an impetus for artistic production. This deliberate delinking of military service from his individual artistic inspiration and output is a rhetorical move of asymmetrical authorship. Rather than become part of a national machine that does not see his individual authorial output, Bearden produces in spite of, and even against, military service's limited national agenda. He defines himself once more, as an artist, and not as a soldier-citizen. This is a move I consider critical cultural citizenship, a pushback against a national agenda that required his service while it denied many blacks access to civil rights, career advancement, and many veteran benefits worthy of an American citizen-soldier. Instead, Bearden acknowledged his bodily reality as a black man in America, and thereby took a position, rather than remain in a demarcated no man's land of being both and neither soldier and black man in America, where authorship is stifled and muted.

The second symptom, a closed circuit of creator, product and spectator, gives artwork made for the public sphere a parallel narrative of contained viewership and authorship: spectator and artist as one person, in a private sphere. In one letter to Quirt, Bearden says, "lately, I have gotten so I want to paint and then put the paintings away except to show them to a few people." Bearden's earlier claiming of the universal now coalesces the spectator and the artist into the product, in the name of aesthetics: "a good painting has its own world. What ideas it arouses are integral and in relation to itself."

Two parallel tracks are made here- one in which the artist is both creator and spectator, and another, where the artist and the spectator remain separate people: a public sphere. On the first track, the artist, after the experience of military service as a no man's land, inserts bubbles and rifts into his art that can contradict his self-professed artistic values and ideas in reference to his military service. The narrowness of this closed circuit of authorship/viewership demonstrates the bewildering experience of military service for the black citizen, a space that others cannot comprehend completely.

The fissure created by this contradiction between Bearden's claiming of the universal and his artistic development, serves to reinsert the black soldier into American mainstream culture, through contradictions and spaces in the national narrative. It is not an active reckoning with the hegemony, but certainly a resistance against erasure and elision of self. Tracing this closed circuit proves problematic to the researcher, as by its nature, things are hidden and kept from the general viewer. At best we can only hope for glimpses and traces into how military service is deeply embedded in post-war authorship.

The second track is the public sphere in which art is often displayed, which presumes public spectators, public viewing, and public critique. In the public sphere, the bubbles and fissures between Bearden's art theory and subsequent work are not readily apparent as connections to his military service. They are often seen by critics as natural products of his cultural upbringing, institutional learning, and membership in art communities of the time (Fine; Kennel; Elleh). But these two circuits exist simultaneously in the system of whiteness. Bearden's work seen as a natural progression of artistic training and development assumes that race is not an integral part of the equation, which is the universal coded as whiteness, what Peggy Mcintosh calls the "invisible knapsack of white privilege" (295), a "conferred dominance" (297). Bearden's artwork post-military life contains fissures and cracks that contradict his focus on supposedly universal themes and forms. That these two circuits can exist in tandem only makes sense viewed through the no man's land of military service, where a soldier's identity as black man and national recruit conflicts and comes into tension against each other. Bearden's artwork, his art theorizing, and his own understanding of his art are intrinsically connected by his racial experiences in the military, and his own attempts to separate them are implicitly reinforcing a deracinated mode of existence. Reintroducing the question of race then re-links Bearden's work to its shifting source in no man's land, and institutional whiteness.

Bearden's closed circuit follows from his documented discomfort with false categorization, which continues to have a place in his artistic ideology as he enters military service. His military service would heighten this sense of alienation, leading him to question his own reckoning with white sight, whether it was authentic and honest, or

falsely following an archetype of blackness that did not present itself in his life. There is an authenticity linked to experience he has to grapple with, as he says in a letter to Walter Quirt, "gradually I think I am arriving at some sort of personal adjustment to the things I want to say"("Walter Quirt Papers", Archives of American Art). Bearden's subsequent artwork makes the case, and space, for agency of the artist, in ways that 1940s society, or the sponsors at hand, would not.

Asymmetrical authorship in fissures

During his time in the military, Bearden was clearly depressed. At Officer Candidate School in the south, he experienced a lot of racism from other soldiers and locals. While he was in the service, he was producing very little art, despite retaining his art studio. His mother also died in 1943 after a bout of pneumonia (Schwartzman). Despite this difficult time, Bearden hardly discussed the details of his service in writing. It came out in other implicit ways, particularly in his art's links to his private letters.

The confluence of Bearden's service, institutional and regional experiences/training, art series, art sketches, letter writing and critical essay writing, produce connections to an archive of asymmetrical authorship that was previously unexamined. This is due to the rigid differentiations between military and civilian life, as well as our predefined understanding of the differences between text-based composition and visual productions.

In one letter to Walter Quirt during his service, Bearden interrupts his writing with a doodle, an abstracted figure, in the style of William Steig's *The Lonely Ones*, and pronounced it significant for "the emotional and religious potential of such an image" (Bearden qtd in Pinder 154). The elongated figure of a man, it is contorted, stretched and

seems to be screaming. It is rendered in geometric shapes, but still 'reads' as a tortured human figure, clearly a part of his writing here. This figure can also be seen as a precursor of his geometric renderings of Christ, in his upcoming art show.

What makes it particularly significant about this visual interruption in his letter is that Bearden never explicits connects the figure to his service, or his suffering during it, but rather places it as an example of his continued artistic expression. Bearden mentions in the letter that he received a copy of Steig's book, and his figure looks similar to Steig's drawings too. Bearden's classification of this sketch as important for its "emotional and religious potential" makes his sketch seem like a reflection of his ideas of the universal values of art, which transcend material connections. As such, for Bearden, this abstraction of the figure seems a necessary objective separation from his present painful experience of alienation within national service.

Yet this artwork's implicit connection to his bodily reality as a black man in military service, speaks in contradiction against his own expressed ideas of artistic universal values, as its meaning is rooted in implicit, specific, bodily experience of a black soldier. Unlike his social realism artworks, the figure is not racialized or given any identifying details to root the viewer's understanding. It is in the closed circuit of artist/spectator, which connects the sketch personally to Bearden's military experience. The military/civilian divide makes it the opposite of a universal theme that connects all mankind. The emotional rendition of this figure, in a letter with otherwise placid overtones, also makes it a clear example of Bearden's asymmetrical authorship. Bearden produced a figure that would have been read by Quirt as an original reference to Steig, and Quirt would not necessarily connect it to Bearden's own depression inside the

military. Bearden's experience with racism in the military is thus showcased in his authorship in a submerged, coded manner. It is simultaneously produced as a fissure in his own understanding and representation of what black art means, and does. This displaced image, when connected to his military service experience, takes on additional values as part of this archive of asymmetrical authorship. It also provides a blueprint on how asymmetrical authorship can be traced in his subsequent art.

"Passion of the Christ" series

Bearden's artistic talent, coupled with his military status, drew attention from Caresse Crosby, who sponsored his first major solo show at her G Place Gallery in Washington DC. Crosby's involvement with black actor and activist Canada Lee, who often protested on behalf of black soldiers, prompted her interest in promoting black artists, particularly black soldiers. In 1944, Bearden was still in the service as an infantryman, and relatively unknown as an artist. Crosby became the first art dealer to show Bearden's work in a solo show at her gallery, in January of 1944, proclaiming great confidence in his artistic ability (Hamalian 139). While Bearden's artistic talent certainly spoke for itself, it would be safe to say that Bearden's status as a black soldier aided her interest in his work. Although, in Bearden's telling, the military had either impeded or looked askance at his artistic ability, Crosby saw this as an apt detail for promotion during WWII. In her letter securing his first show, she asks him to send her " 1)paintings 2) titles…. your rating in the army", and subsequently, Bearden's solo show was titled, "10 Hierographic Paintings by Sgt. Romare Bearden". Subsequent positive reviews of his first show led to a second show for Bearden at Crosby's gallery upon his military discharge, a show centered on the Passion of Christ. The *Passion of Christ* series showed

first at the G Place Gallery, and then in the Kootz Gallery in 1945. The popularity of his *Passion* artworks launched Bearden's artistic career as an abstract expressionist artist.

Bearden's *Passion* series, a set of paintings on Christ's suffering, crucifixion and resurrection, were done in watercolor, and converted to oils for the Kootz Gallery show. Stylistically, the series was dramatically different from his pre-war paintings. Even his method was different, as he diluted oil paint to take on watercolor properties to become more fluid and transparent, " a single application of paint replaced the layering of diverse hues; colors shifted from earth tones to a high-keyed palette; forms became more geometric in character and compositions more interlocking" (Fine 17). His social realist forms became more expressionist and abstract, and the colors became more vivid and primary. In taking on supposedly universal themes, Bearden's process also became more streamlined, as the conceptual components of his artwork started to recede into the works themselves. In effect, Bearden's *Passion* series marked new territory in his move into abstract expressionism. However, I examine it here for Bearden's renderings of iconic images of Christ and biblical imagery as demonstrations of asymmetrical authorship: the rendering of an intangible reality of a black soldier inside universal, now iconic images, work that contradicts his theoretical concerns.

Icon substitutions as asymmetrical authorship

Bearden often worked with religious icons in his art. His social realist pieces used figures that represented the Holy Family, but, in his rendering, racialized as black men and women. There is an artistic history of using Christian imagery, particularly after WWI, when artists used religious imagery to evoke apocalyptic warnings of the atom bomb and the Holocaust. Artists like Picasso, a favorite of Bearden's, also used figures of

the crucifixion, mixing modernism with an "emphasis on man's cruelty to man" (Karmel 254). The universal implication of Christ as a figure of suffering and redemption had its appeal to Bearden. He notes in his introduction to the *Passion* series, "the power of the Christ story, its universal recognition, and the general familiarity of everyone with its events… finds new plastic equivalents and standards of aesthetic and psychological values" ("Walter Quirt Papers"). He further notes its universal appeal when he names the artists who have worked with Christ figures, notables such as Giotto, El Greco, Fra Angelico, all part of the Great Masters of European art that he had studied and continued to study.

Bearden's written introduction to his *Passion* series makes it clear that he intended his new collection, post-war service, as a continuation of what art means in universal terms. Bearden presents the Christ story of suffering as "perhaps the greatest expression of man's humanism", a story that, "supercedes reality and the usual conformist interpretations" ("Walter Quirt Papers"). He selected the Christ story for its universal implications of the narrative of suffering, as an "expression of man's humanism", for its "aesthetic" and a myth that "supersedes reality." The white, default human experience represented by these supposed universal ideals, the liberal humanist individual is just the liberal, deracinated subject. Bearden's sketches and thinking about the Passion series, which occurred during and immediately post-service, makes this series important as a contradiction of precisely those universal terms. His new project and its embedded whiteness then comes into contact with what Bearden was now familiar with: the material realities of black servicepersons like himself. Bearden's expression of his tangible reality of black experience inside Jim Crow, while professing an interest in

universal humanity and its values, surfaces as fissures in the tension between his experience and the universal quality of whiteness, as represented in christian iconic imagery. In my reading, Bearden's *Passion* series thus reinforces the bodily reality of being a black soldier, in the no man's land of WWII military service. It inscribes his material reality within the iconic representations of Christ and the soldiers in subliminal and submerged ways. Most significantly, the rendering of these paintings are an implicit challenge to Bearden's claiming of the universal, and as such, can be seen as asymmetrical authorship.

An icon can be defined as a "pictorial representation, a symbol or emblem, a sign whose form suggests its meaning" (Merriam-Webster). Iconic figures are thus universally recognized, but also embedded with multiple meanings and concerns. While icons are often associated with Christian imagery, the term icon has since encompassed other well-seen images, their definition of icon rooted in how often they were seen and recognized. Nicole Fleetwood, in discussing icons in photographs of the American civil rights era noted that, "while the icon evokes universality, it also plays with specificity as it encompasses a host of possibilities and contradictions for understanding what it means to be a black in the United States" (Fleetwood 46).

So, Bearden's iconic representations, in my view, can be read in two ways: invoking the universal, itself a normalization of whiteness as unnamed center and standard, and, in contradiction: specific renditions of black material reality as servicemen in WWII. The second reading, a submerged portrayal of Christ's suffering as linked to black reality in WWII, is one that is harder to trace, as Bearden leaves no obvious, explicit, markings of blackness within these canvases, and black servicemembers and

their realities were not well-known or recognized. Yet, his insistence of the universality of these figures and their narrative comes up in tension against Bearden's own suffering within the military, and these artworks come from this post-war period. As such, it is necessary to examine *Passion of the Christ* for what Bearden never confers upon it- the contradictory state of his understanding of the black artist and soldier. My asymmetrical reading practices here demonstrate what is missed when we focus on readings within the disciplinary boundaries of art movements, public/private spheres or genres of composition.

Here, I specifically read *Golgotha, He is Arisen* and *Untitled (Roman Soldiers Beating Christ)* (1945), all from the *Passion* series, in terms of its implicit references to Bearden's military service as a black servicemember in WWII. *Golgotha* (1945) refers to the hill of Jesus' death, but Bearden's painting focuses on the period of time where Christ is hanging from the cross, an intense period of suffering and tribulation. More so than previous stations of the Cross, here, Christ is in both physical and spiritual anguish. The scriptural narrative of the Passion has Christ wrestling with his father's silence, "from noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land. About three in the afternoon, Jesus cried out in a loud voice, 'Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?'"(which means, 'My God, my god why have you forsaken me?') When some of those standing there heard this, they said, 'He's calling Elijah'" (Matthew 27: 45-47, NIV). Bearden's introduction to his series notes that he took inspiration from both Matthew and Mark's telling of the Passion. In Matthew's narrative, the focus is on both the internal suffering of Jesus, and the external spectacle of this suffering. But the origin of Christ's suffering is misunderstood by the spectators, and supposedly corrected by the narrative through the

translation, “My god, my god, why have you forsaken me?” As such, the icon in this painting is imbued with multiple meanings: external anguish, internalized alienation, lost spiritual connection, and messages lost in translation.

Bearden’s rendering of this scene is embedded with all the ambiguity of this narrative. The gestures, poses, and even flattened shapes of the painting reference artwork by other Masters such as Picasso and Duccio (Metropolitan Museum of Art). Christ occupies the center of the canvas, with overstretched arms, portrayed completely in color: red, with one green arm and white crown of thorns. The use of watercolor gives the figure of Christ a transparent quality, as he seems to merge with the cross itself. The large splash of color, a dark blue and purple, on the canvas, and the subsequent focus of it, is on the soldiers and spectators at the foot of the cross. While Duccio’s original piece has Christ suspended high above the spectators, with negative space in between, Bearden’s canvas has them all in close proximity to each other, the blue color at one point even bleeding into Christ’s body. The black outlines of the figures and the spheres of color surrounding the soldiers and spectators are, in contrast, rigidly defined.

If the goal, as Bearden put it, was to present a story of “universal recognition”, his painting muddies that in a number of ways. The icon of the suffering Christ is not rendered realistically. Here he seems more of a representation of what is lost in translation, a transparent, near invisible figure, eclipsed by the blobs of color that accentuates the soldiers and spectators. The black outlines, while an attempt at delineating figures, only adds to the ambiguity of what is seen and what is submerged. As such, the narrative of the suffering Christ gets sidelined by an interruption of the soldiers,

their pointed spears being one of the few objects of definition and contrast on the canvas.

The Roman soldiers here are the formal and visual link between Bearden's service, which he disavows, and his art, and become iconic substitutions for the Christ figure. The contortions of the spectators and the soldiers are the focus of this visual spectacle. Despite Bearden's insistence, the Christ narrative is elided over in favor of the raucous crowd and a military presence responsible for the painful spectacle, those who are rendered almost without faces. The icon in this painting, the suffering Christ, is almost transparent, sidelined, and lost in translation. This painting, like others in his *Passion* series, represent Bearden's military service as fissures and gaps in translation, a passing over, rather than renderings of a mythic soldier figure of iconic proportions.

Bearden's "*Untitled (Roman Soldiers Beating Christ)*"(1945), seems to work in a different direction, by presenting Christ, the sufferer, at the bottom of the canvas. Christ is rendered as mummy-like supine figure, almost geometric in shape, his face in profile, and any emotion absent. The negative space around the body serves to emphasize the mobile and frenetic figures at the corners of the canvas, the soldiers. Where Christ's face is empty of any emotion except resignation, the Roman soldiers, by contrast, are a furious mix of lines of movement, color and tension, bookending the scene on both sides. Their bodies merge with each other, as it is unclear where one ends and another begins, except for each soldier's outstretched arm. I read the repeated gesture as reminiscent of the soldier's salute or the Nazi soldier's *heil*. As with the previous painting, Bearden focuses all of the intensity of the scene's emotion in the formal details: the gestures, the framing,

the color of the soldier figures of the work, rather than facial expression or detail of Christ. The military figures have usurped the narrative.

As the title indicates, this is a scene of societal punishment of individual expression, a fact that reverberates for a former soldier like Bearden. His own service had shown him how little he fit into the military machine, as his art training was derided, and dismissed. Bearden's military experiences often clashed with his artistic temperament. During Officer Candidate School, he writes in a letter, "I'll be home soon, because in the reports the captain said that he felt that my past background as an artist hardly fit[ted] me for an officer in this field. Of course that isn't half the story". As with his more abstract painting series, what is not expressed in his letter is almost as important as what is there. During WWII, black officers were scarce, and often not placed in command of overseas forces due to the systemic racism and Jim Crow policies of WWII America. Bearden's academic training or cultural upbringing had not prepared him for this dismissal of his worth, or his leadership. So aligning his experience with the iconic representation of the suffering Christ would be jarringly untrue, as his experience would not fit into the deracinated universal subject. The subjects at the periphery, the soldiers, are substitute icons for military service and its effects, bleeding into, gesturing at, and challenging the passive and inert universal: Christ.

The same signaling of formal concerns of gestures and figures dominates Bearden's most famous painting of the series, *He is Arisen*, which was bought by the Museum of Modern Art after his show in 1945. More than any other painting in this series, critics see Christ's resurrection of *He is Arisen* as exemplifying the theme of "perseverance through suffering, rebirth and transcendence" (Pynder 145**).** I read this

painting, in its focus on the angel's gestures, and heavily lined and distinct forms, as gesturing at a resurrection past military life. Much like his previous paintings in this series, Bearden substitutes iterative iconic gestures (the angel's) as bodily representations of black military service.

The painting is the scene of Christ's resurrection on the third day, after his suffering and death. The title of the painting comes from the angels' admonition to the women visiting Jesus' tomb to care for his body, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here, he is risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay" (Matthew 28: 5-6, NIV). The focus of the narrative is the spectators' disbelief at the negative space: the empty tomb of Jesus, which they are unable to reconcile with their understanding of Jesus' human death. The angels' message of certainty, that "he is risen", is supported not with the reality of the resurrected Jesus' presence, but the empty tomb itself, and the women's renewed viewing: "come and see the place where he lay." A curious choice for a visual production, this biblical narrative privileges negative space and absence as miraculous.

Bearden's rendition focuses on the angels' signaling, with gestures, at the miracle of the empty tomb. *He is Arisen* is a series of concentric layers of lines and shapes, with multiple faces emerging from the figure in the middle, the angel. The peripheral figures of the women who are spectators to the invisible miracle are darkly outlined and delineated, an artistic element Bearden continues to repeat in his later works. They are three or four figures in relief at the bottom of the painting, either in pilgrimage or worship. Like the other paintings, these women are at the edges of the narrative, but enclosed within the painting in Bearden's unifying color scheme. While they are

presented in muted colors of green, brown and blue, each has arms gesturing upward to the large figure. The Christ and/or angelic figure also gestures upward with uplifted arm, reminiscent of the soldiers' gestures of previous paintings in the series.

While Bearden alludes to the iconic representation of Jesus, signified by the risen arm often seen in paintings of Jesus by the old Masters of art, this interpretation is disrupted by the explosive nature of the fragmented faces of the angel figure. The faces are represented in multiples as contrasting profiles, some with pointed teeth suggesting violence and brutality, and all in earthy shades of red, brown and blue.The open tomb gapes behind this rainbow of figures and spectacle, but is sidelined by its show.

In this painting then, the peripheral figures' gestured violence have taken over the main figure of the work. The hopeful nature of the resurrection story is thus undermined by Bearden's portrayal, in its violence, multiplicity, and garish sensibilities of truth and the vision of the spectator. The universal figure, the icon here, has been disrupted with earthy, bodily realities of violence. So the white, deracinated universal icon has been overtaken by the practices of violence and oppression, despite the external narrative of a miraculous event. As such, *He is Arisen* mirrors the nature of America's WWII narrative of liberation and progress, which is overlaid and disrupted with racist practices of an institution of whiteness.

This resurrection is profoundly disruptive, but clearly transformative to both artist and audience.In a letter to art dealer Caresse Crosby, Bearden describes his *Passion* series in contradictory terms:

"It may be thought strange that a soldier should . . . paint such a non bellicose series of pictures. But I hope everything I have experienced in the Army is incorporated

in the paintings in an emotional sense. For instance, this is certainly a sadistic age, evidenced not only on the battlefields but in the day to day relations of people. Some of the paintings express this."

Bearden's series, focused on the physical brutality of Christ's suffering at the hands of his fellow country members and governmental forces, hardly qualifies as "non bellicose." It is only the iconic status of Christ as a redemptive pacifist figure in art that can account for that adjectival phrase. In my reading, Bearden's portrayal of Christ is not built around the universal representation of Christ, but the substitution of icons and peripheral figures and gestures. It is rooted in figurative representations, in material suffering, both abstract national subject and still an object of systemic racism. It is "not only on the battlefields", but also "in the day to day relations of people". This everyday practice, once rendered in Bearden's social realist paintings, recognizes that the everyday is a charged site of cultural practices of belonging, where black soldiers and artists can claim authorship in an asymmetrical manner.

This is clearly seen in Bearden's own contradictions, between his art theorizing of the "universal" and his art renderings that reference the material reality of black soldiers. It is also shown clearly in his insistence that his paintings are "non bellicose", yet expressing in "an emotional sense", "everything I have experienced in the Army". It would also explain why the MoMA included Bearden's *He is Arisen* in its 2015 show "Soldier, Spectre, Shaman: The Figure and the Second World War", which focused on artworks of the human figure, "the body serving as subject and object, mirror and metaphor" of warfare experience (MoMA).

Bearden's art series, critical essays, wartime letters all counter the public narrative of WWII which misses the presence of multiple bodies and voices of military servicepersons of color. Romare Bearden's asymmetrical authorship, in the face of his own avoidance of his military service's connection to his art, and his insistence on the universal artistic values, is instead a challenge to the deracinated subject of whiteness. His critical cultural citizenship challenges the racially progressive idea of national belonging for all citizens, as it came through his segregated and unequal military service. While Bearden continues to be best known for his abstract expressionist art, later rendered as multiple collage series of black American life, it is necessary to recast his military service as a disruptor to his claiming of the universal.

Chapter Three: WWII and Visual Authorship: Masood Ali Warren's "right to look" as critical cultural citizenship

WWII's place in American history is best seen in visual representations of its soldiers and troops, as both art and national propaganda, often in service to the myth of the "good war". However, the workings of cultural citizenship, particularly for soldiers of color who did not fit the paradigm of the all-American soldier portrayed in the public sphere, was more nuanced. The work of black artists and soldiers, and their artistic output during their military service, demonstrate what I am calling "asymmetrical authorship" in defining cultural citizenship for black American soldiers on their own terms. In this chapter, I examine the institutional training and sketchbooks drafts of Masood Ali Warren, artist and WWII soldier. I argue for a form of cultural citizenship, what I call "critical cultural citizenship", through his work, one that is both the product and resistance to the narrative of institutional whiteness and its claiming of progressiveness and American nationalism in WWII. Warren's version of critical cultural citizenship, what I am calling his "right to look", and my narrativizing of his archive, re-defines the notion of national identity and belonging during WWII, particularly through the artistic indictment of "white sight" in visual culture.

Legal and Cultural Citizenship

Legal citizenship in America has always depended on a constantly evolving definition of what whiteness was. In 1790, Congress restricted American citizenship to "white persons", and racial restrictions on immigration did not change until after WWII, when U.S. racial quotas on immigration began to look uncomfortably similar to Germany's own racial exclusions (López 44). Despite the eventual move away from

racial categorization, the effects of legal citizenship's reliance on definitions of whiteness, an unstable social construct that depended on bodies of color (defined as non-white), was lasting. That effect was profoundly a visual one, where whiteness was something "seen", identified visually. This proved most distinct as the Supreme Court moved away from a scientific definition of race to a culturally accepted, popular public opinion, of what "white" and "citizen" looked like (López). Since legal citizenship in America often turned on the "look" of the citizen, particularly in relation to a whiteness undefined and constantly evolving (López), the "right to look" of the composer proves particularly important in cultural citizenship. According to Nicholas Mierzoff, "the right to look" is, "an exchange of looks in which all parties both look and are looked at in the mutual pursuit of an understanding of the other" (15). While mainstream white culture has already claimed its right to look at the "other", in Mierzoff's definition is the urgency of the marginalized subject who has to "reclaim" that look, and so, "claim[s] the right to be seen by the common as a counter to the possibility of being disappeared by governments….it is the claim to a history that is not told from the point of view of the police" (15).

Cultural citizenship is a concept built on practices that form citizen behavior, including traditions, rituals and social mores. These practices become acts of citizen-making when they are adopted as means of addressing society's exclusion and isolation of marginalized groups of people, that is, when legal citizenship is questioned, and people are thus excluded from the national body. Following Renato Rosaldo's definition of cultural citizenship as,"the right to be different, and to participate in a democratic sense" (402) , Aihwa Ong (1996) describes cultural citizenship as a "dual process of self-making

and being-made within webs of power linked to the nation-state and civil society" (738). Both Rosaldo and Ong argue for citizenship beyond its legal definition. It is an ongoing cultural negotiation, marked and negotiated in the individual body, either through difference or categorization and subject formation. In their definitions, citizens participate in cultural citizenship to make and remake their civic participation as part of the body politic of the nation-state.

However, this definition of cultural citizenship does not account for the citizen's agency in challenging his/her position in society, *while* asserting their right to belong to the national body. I argue that cultural citizenship can be an avenue for articulating a new space of citizen behavior that *challenges* their role and position inside the nation-state, what I am calling "critical citizenship", highlighting their continued status of non-belonging. The mutability of legal citizenship, its shifting allegiances to science and racist social culture, created fissures in how citizenship was viewed in America. What I call Warren's *critical* cultural citizenship, I argue, used the "right to look" to fill in these fissures, and address citizenship and belonging on the terms of the de-personalized and marginalized Americans, to both challenge and claim the position of citizen. I locate this form of cultural citizenship inside a major institution of the national agenda, one that relies on citizen recruitment and obligation: military service.

Participating in warfare is a national endeavor for citizens, but this participation was a fraught enterprise for American soldiers of color during WWII. As a requirement of citizen life, the draft recruited from all ethnicities and social classes, but the same national apparatus did not provide these soldier-citizens equal rights in civilian life. Jim Crow policies through America still persisted during the 1930s and 40s, through blatant

segregation both inside and outside the military. Simultaneously, America's participation in WWII was billed as a liberatory effort in ensuring freedom and liberty across the world, while it continued to restrict its own citizenry from even serving in the military on equal terms with white Americans.

For the soldier of color, serving as a national subject meant he must participate in a liberatory endeavor as an agent, but his bodily reality as a black American meant that he would not be able to access such rights and liberties for himself. In effect, military service erased black soldiers' bodily realities in service to the national apparatus, and critical cultural citizenship was one avenue to rebuild what was destabilized inside this system. The American soldier-citizen negotiates his/her identity through a component of cultural citizenship I call "asymmetrical authorship", a form of individual composing that acknowledges the material realities of servicepersons of color while in service for a nationalist agenda, in sometimes private and understudied spheres and genres such as sketchbook entries and personal soldier letters. As Ong's definition makes clear, the binary articulates that cultural citizenship is both "self-making and being-made", what I connect to the American soldier of color as both actively constructed and deconstructed, both agent and subject.

In this chapter I argue that visual artist Masood Ali Warren, a WWII black soldier, used his "right to look" to represent the experience of black citizens inside institutional whiteness, an experience he has in his art education, then in the American military. Warren's artistic output, what I call "asymmetrical authorship", encompasses a reckoning with institutional whiteness, and is an example of "critical" cultural citizenship. Tellingly, his authorship draws a connecting line from academia's

institutional whiteness to military whiteness, as supposedly racially liberal but glaringly unequal establishments. These representations of whiteness demonstrate that WWII's myth of progress and liberalism was constructed on the bodies and experiences of black soldiers that saw the opposite in both civilian and military life. As such, Warren's "right to look" becomes paramount in challenging WWII's exceptionalist narrative that only legitimizes the white experience and gaze, that is, illustrating my example of critical cultural citizenship.

WWII visual culture as "white sight"

The 1930s and 40s saw a rise in the use of media communications for wartime propaganda, which provides the ideal forum for visual images to valorize American participation in WWII (Ryan). The images proliferated through mass media served a clear purpose: to promote America's national myth of the "good war", one undertaken by citizenry under obligations to serve and sacrifice for its national cause. The U.S. government's Office of War Information (OWI) and its civilian agencies for Depression relief such as Works Progress Administration (WPA) simultaneously bankrolled artists while controlling and censuring their visual output. As the war continued, the industry's reliance on the government heightened, as George Roeder notes, "After Pearl Harbor, the companies devoted roughly three-quarters of their screen time to coverage of the war, making them more dependent than ever on the government for opportunities for their camera crews...clearance of film they shot, and access to the huge volume of footage generated by military film units" (18).

Certain war photography that showed bodies of American soldiers were not released to the public until 1943, and when it was eventually released, it was only done so

with the intent of furthering American public commitment to the war efforts. This censorship of certain images and release of specific visual imagery continued a message of good vs. evil, hiding the nuances and ambiguities of war in an oversimplification of American participation in warfare as liberatory. The same form of censorship and specific political focus was even followed by the film industry and corporations, which produced motion pictures and newsreels (Roeder). Similarly, the U.S. government saw New Deal programs like Works Progress Administration (WPA), which paid artists and writers to create murals, sculptures and other forms of public art, as an attempt at creating a cohesive national culture and citizenry, and censored, destroyed or defunded art that proved politically nuanced or leftist (Harris).

Much of the visual propaganda positioned the American soldier, and the American public by extension, as white. The Armed forces were segregated for WWII, and documentary movies made for the specific purpose of uniting Americans behind the war effort furthered the color division by focusing on white soldiers and marginalizing or erasing the efforts of soldiers of color. Documentaries such as *It's Everybody's War* (1942) and Frank Capra's *Why we Fight* series either ignored the efforts of a multiethnic military body or extolled the values of the "free world's" diversity: religion, vocation or region, while omitting race. When race is mentioned, it was primarily to characterize enemy soldiers (Garrett).

I argue that this elision, a form of censorship, is problematic in two ways: not only does it visually stunt the representation of the work of soldiers of color, it does so without directly acknowledging such a move. Simultaneously, it uses these same effaced bodies of color in war recruitment, in order to defend an ideology built on diversity and

liberation, as even the titles of these documentaries attest. This system of institutional whiteness depends heavily on the unacknowledged and unregistered bodies of color to legitimize the same national apparatus that virtually erases their contributions. What is most essential then, is not merely the existence of such whitewashed images, but a set of viewing practices and perspective that viewed, exploited and effaced bodies of color from the military experience.

Sarah Blackwood terms this viewing as "white sight", a "set of viewing practices that claim an interpretative and epistemological authority that is fused with racial identity", a "visual illiteracy". White sight is a set of viewing practices through the system of whiteness that "shapes..distorts...the world it pretends to view coolly and objectively" (50). "White sight" names the white gaze as a limited scope, one that only sees people of color in distorted ways, if at all. Blackwood labels it a "symptom and cause of racism" (50). What is particularly significant, in my reading of Blackwood's term, is white sight's connection to *renderings* of that sight, or cultural and textual productions that effectively reproduce and represent visual culture largely from one stilted perspective. The significance of "white sight" is thus not a passive act of seeing, but a shaping of reality, as it is produced in writings or visual art, productions that reproduce stereotypical and jaundiced views of others.

Broadening the definition of visual culture from static texts to a set of viewing practices, Blackwood presents examples where black writers would write into visual culture to proliferate black representations to combat "white sight". What she calls "textual explorations of the visual", "remind readers and viewers that black people were watching, and through this sight producing their own forms of interpretation,

epistemology, and authority" (45). This is in direct opposition to what she terms "white sight."

Scholars of WWII have examined the visual culture of the war in terms of propaganda and race. They have noted that visual propaganda of the war was also as segregated as the troops, reinforcing the visual image of a democratic America that was largely white (Garrett). Other scholars, studying specific genres like photography, have examined the role of the visual image in revealing vulnerabilities of white masculinity through POW photographs (Twomey), and the intersection of race, gender and citizenship in photojournalistic documentation of Japanese Americans in internment camps in the work of Dorothea Lange, Ansel Adams and Carl Mydans (Flamiano). Critics like Robert Chester and Jodi Melamed have noted what Chester calls the "retroactive multiculturalism" (Chester 35) of 21st century memorialization of WWII, associating the war, particularly in terms of visual imagery, with racial equality and color-blindness rather than Jim Crow. However, scholars have not yet examined WWII visual culture from the perspective of the black soldier-citizen's response to white sight, and visual authorship of bodies of color recruited into its ideological battle. This chapter will take up this lack, by arguing that the "white sight" in WWII visual culture, is a willful misrepresentation of the American body as a monolith of whiteness, and that black soldier artist Masood Ali Warren's "critical cultural citizenship" has engaged with this monolith in prolific yet unacknowledged ways. "White sight" is recorded visually, and historically, as a part of military whiteness. While blacks were part of the military body, they were unregistered and unrecognized as individuals outside the military purpose. However, WWII's black writers and artists were also claiming a "right to

look”, producing into visual culture, for the purpose of representation through proliferation.

The “right to look”

If looking captures the subjective reality for the viewer, the right to look becomes an act of making your reality on your terms, outside of how society and laws defined “citizen”. In Nicholas Mierzoff’s definition, the visual sphere is where meaning is created and contested, and not merely a historical catalog of images. As such, visual culture is about the everyday experience, negotiating meaning at the individual level, and a mode of comparison rather than a field of study. I argue that the “right to look” should be broadened to include authoring, in the visual realm, of texts that straddle and blur the boundaries between genres and the public/private spheres. It is a reflection of visual culture because it is about hegemonic power’s relationship to its subject, told from the subject’s point of view. I define this as authorship because it is the rhetorical connection between the visual and the writing, between the “look” and the product. For the black American subject, it takes on engagements with power from inside the apparatus of national service. The resulting authorship, which is an asymmetrical move against hegemony, cannot simply be catalogued as art, writing, or other genres of expression, but must be viewed in the context of the subject’s military experience, as practices of critical cultural citizenship. This authorship is submerged or hidden inside other narratives about WWII or black American history. The construction and delineation of this archive both contest and reveal the narrative of whiteness as representation of national power, particularly in material terms of bodies of color.

In terms of asymmetrical authoring, there are visual works of authorship by black servicepersons that have not been addressed as products that represent their cultural belonging, or their sense of national and individual identity. The work of Masood Ali Warren, a WWII black artist and military serviceman, proves to be a strong example of authorship that does just that: artwork that reclaims the "right to look", in both visuality and countervisuality, through mainstream educational training, and in private sketchbooks that document black participation in WWII.

As an artist documenting WWII's visual culture, Warren's authorship is made explicit as I trace asymmetrical authorship through his archive. His educational career, and its sponsorship of his artistic vision, meant that his artwork, shaped by institutional whiteness, was often misidentified as culture-specific iterations of blackness. His sketchbooks, examined here, are catalogued in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library as part of the James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection of African American Arts and Letters. This archive began as a collection by white photographer Carl Van Vechten, which reflected his own "abiding interest in and commitment to black people and black culture" (Beinecke). As such, Warren's work is catalogued in an archive rooted in the white sight of black cultural productions, which does not necessarily account for the whiteness undergirding his production. Similarly, Warren's public works were largely sculptures and sketches of people in public areas such as New York City (NY Public Library). Thus it remained unregistered as protestations against a system of white sight, works that combated what Blackwood calls, "visual illiteracy." I will argue, with my restructuring of his archive that Warren's private renderings in his military sketchbooks, which reclaims his "right to look" against white sight's prolific representations of WWII,

are a part of the counter-visuality of WWII. It does this work by proliferating representations of blackness.

Masood Ali Warren and institutional training

Masood Ali Wilbert Warren was a black artist and sculptor whose work documented Black Americans in the early 20th century. His art spanned the 1930s to the 1970s, encompassing both the New York City and Los Angeles art scene. Research on Warren's background and artwork is scant. My narrativizing of Warren's asymmetrical authorship, done through his archival material, argues that his institutional membership and training shaped Warren's "right to look" at military whiteness and white sight in WWII visual culture, eventually critiquing its normative position through private, asymmetrical authorship. Warren's institutional training enabled him to critique these normative assumptions of whiteness, undermining the tradition from within as a black subject who practiced the same traditional methods and conventions. Warren studied in renowned art institutions and educational settings, liberal programs that centered on the changing role of art in the public sphere in the 1930s. Art programs in the Great Depression, despite being administered by a variety of programs and institutions, were often governed by an expectation of the government's responsibility in funding and maintaining art programs, and restructured art programs in terms of "access and participation", redefining art as "the property of Everyman" (Gibson). The government's increasing role in even private education meant that the world of art had to account for its governmental patronage and influence, sometimes in resistance but often in adapting to national agendas and social values.

Institutional whiteness, or what Diane Gusa calls "white institutional presence", contains, "unexamined historically situated white cultural ideology embedded in the language, cultural practices, traditions, and perceptions of knowledge", which "allow these institutions to remain racialized" (3). In an institution with "white institutional presence", Gusa clarifies, "whiteness is positioned as normative and its educational practices as neutral" (467). I argue that Warren's educational institutes, ASL and NYU, show markings of institutional whiteness in two ways. One, the institutions proclaim an emphasis on craft and skill, their "perception of knowledge", over material or societal concerns of the era. Secondly, the institutions present their avowed concern for liberal artistic values of freedom of expression in racially neutral terms.

Warren attended the Art Students League of New York from 1932-1935, and earned a Bachelor in Fine Arts, with a focus on mural painting, at New York University in 1939. I view New York University, Art Students League, and the U.S. military, as institutions representative of what Deborah Brandt called "sponsors of literacy", those who "are any agents, local or distant, concrete or abstract, who enable, support, teach, model, as well as recruit, regulate, suppress, or withhold literacy- and gain advantage by it in some way" (25). As such, these institutions, with largely white student populations, in a time of Jim Crow, educated and 'sponsored' Warren, and shaped his educational purpose in alignment with contradictory goals: art as free expression, and art in service to national agendas. They benefited from recruiting students of color, representative of their liberal educational philosophies, and also provided Warren an educational opportunity at integrated elite institutions that was a rarity for others in black society in the 1930s. Thus these institutions and their educational philosophies prove vital components of Warren's

artistic training, which, I argue, shaped his understanding of the role of art and the artistic vision as a grappling with institutional whiteness, and extended this experience to working in a contested space of the WWII-era military.

Warren's education at the Art Students League of New York and New York University immediately preceded his entrance into the American military in the 1940s, where he composed hundreds of pencil sketches of working black Americans in military life, documented in private sketchbooks. The educational philosophy of these institutions is particularly important in understanding how it shaped black military soldier-citizens such as Warren to see themselves, and their authorship, on the spectrum of dutiful citizen to revolutionary artist in ways that seem contradictory: both as institutionally trained artists, and counter-culture producers.

Warren and the Art Students League

Warren's notion of the artist as citizen was a product of the Art Students League of New York (ASL), best known for its historically broad appeal to established artists and amateurs alike. The ASL was inherently built on contradictory values. While many influential artists (among them, Jackson Pollock, Norman Rockwell, Roy Lichtenstein, Cy Twombly, Eva Hesse) started or continued their art education at the ASL, the league's creation in 1875 was not prompted by established educational institutions. The Art Students League was founded by a group of break-away art students from the National Academy of Design. Largely run by student consensus, the ASL proved instrumental in shaping the zeitgeist of changes in music, literature and visual arts through the 20th century (Steiner). The ASL's curious blend of student-led governance and its work in establishing foundational art groups such as the American Fine Arts Society and the

Society of American Artists and the Architectural League, lent it an air of being simultaneously pro and anti-establishment.

The contradiction present in its establishment also existed in its political expression. The ASL had a "reputation for diversity" (Steiner) but it mainly extended to the tolerance of *political* differences among artists and teachers, particularly in the 1930s and 40s. Artists like Kenneth Rayes Miller (1876-1952) taught classes on mural painting, and some of his students went on to make art for the Works Progress Administration (WPA), as part of the New Deal programs. Other artists like Hany Sternberg (1904-2001) influenced by the social and political concerns of industrialization in the 1930s, spent a year among coal miners and steelworkers, documenting their work through lithographs (Koob 54-55). Such tolerance even had its limits. Social activism and philosophy, particularly about the working class, was "a common feature at the league cafeteria...a great many artists of the period found themselves in sympathy with what was perceived as the 'down-trodden' worker", but "whatever it might have meant to the politically-motivated, it had little lasting effect on the serious art student" (Steiner 167). An interest in politically disenfranchised citizens was a surface commitment for what Steiner called the "serious" artist, the assumption undergirding ASL's view of art was that skill development was more important than political leanings. Such a view emphasizes artistic vision over the material citizen body, or ideology over materiality. ASL's sponsorship of Warren would thus suppress any fusion of identity with artistic vision for the 'serious' art student.

Similarly, post WWII, the League was eager to recruit former GI's who came in as art students, a necessary fix to their declining enrollment. However, they were

simultaneously decrying the new students' inferior and fleeting interests and skills in art (Steiner). So, political involvement and identity was tolerated, if it connected to maintaining the institution or the art, but not encouraged, as the artistic vision and work promoted by the ASL was paramount. Any efforts at recruiting a more diverse student body was thus dismissed as a watering down of art's inherent value.

The League's focus was on providing a variety of classes on learning the techniques of art, and although its work was student-centered, there did not seem to be a permanent working space for matters of identity, race and American politics. In its attempt at providing a tolerant space for all kinds of art, matters of identity were curiously submerged. Yet, many of its artists worked for governmental programs such as the WPA, demonstrating the contradictory intertwining of governmental influence, hegemony, and artistic development. The ASL's contradictory milieu yet assumed a form of art that is 'pure', and exempt from the ugliness of racial and social politics, a dissociation of the art student body from the world at large. Its institutional whiteness is thus demonstrated, not merely in the largely white student population, but in its reliance on foreign-born European master artist-teachers as proof of "diversity", and its institutional insistence on its "pure" art over societal realities in the WWII era. The ASL's sponsorship of black citizens like Warren demonstrates that sponsors of literacy, often "enable, support, teach", but also "regulate, suppress or withhold...and gain advantage by it in some way" (25). ASL was thus able to use black bodies like Warren in their recruitment as evidence of their liberality, while dismissing their political realities as disenfranchised citizens in America as ideology not worthy of "serious" art students.

Warren's education at the League would have certainly seen a mix of this populism and focus on the education of artistic technique, contradictions indicative of institutional whiteness. It was paradoxically a training that prepared him for WPA work in populist genres as a mural painter, but one that was rooted in white supremacy's exclusivity in the name of technique and skill.

New York University in the 1930s

Masood Ali Warren, then known as Wilbert Warren, studied at New York University's Fine Arts Program from 1936-1939, earning his Bachelors in Fine Arts, with a focus in mural painting. His continued education in elite institutional settings is particularly unique at a time of Jim Crow segregation and the Great Depression. It was also unconventional because artists did not require college education to be considered masters of their profession. Warren himself has left no documentation of his thinking behind his choices in education, but I view his educational career in both elite institutions, ASL and NYU, as choices made to further his social and economic standing, providing him educational opportunities unavailable to many blacks during the Great Depression. Nonetheless, education at largely white institutions also means instruction on how whiteness works in these spaces. Like ASL, NYU leadership advocated an educational experience that was accessible to all Americans, more so when their enrollment suffered. For NYU, like for ASL, the institutional focus was a paradoxical mix of artistic ideals with governmental influences, a continual question of what constructed authenticity in art.Thus their sponsorship of Warren retains the contradictory nature of institutional whiteness packaged as "prestigious" education, elite opportunity, aligned with democratic goals of progress.

The administration of NYU, under Chancellor Harry Woodburn Chase, and their involvement with governmental forces to increase enrollment while attempting to maintain programmatic authenticity, were forces that shaped Warren's own educational experience at NYU in markedly conflicting ways. As Deborah Brandt points out, these forces "also represent the causes into which people's literacy usually gets recruited" (25). Thus, I argue that Warren's programmatic influences and training at NYU shaped his understanding of the arts and their connection to the national and individual body as a contradictory but pervasive mix, particularly for a black artist in predominantly white institutions.

The arts historically have a tenuous connection to institutional training and instruction. Pre-WWII, the effects of the Depression kept art student numbers low in academic art programs. Although post- WWII saw a resurgence in art student enrollment due to the effects of the G.I. Bill, artists continued to see themselves, and their art, not as a professional's work, but rather the "grace of heaven", an innate talent or vocation (Gropius, quoted in Singerman 8). A distrust of the institution's role in creating artists, and belief that at best the institute provides training in techniques and skills, is echoed in the programs and teachers themselves. This world view came up hard against the involvement of the government during the New Deal programs and WWII recruitment and training, and universities' increasing desire to keep their programs relevant, while maintaining their disciplinary focus.

Chancellor Harry Woodburn Chase was the president of New York University from 1933-1951, spanning depression-era years to WWII and the post-war years of increasing student enrollment. Chase's educational goals, particularly in maintaining

enrollment, met a difficult era in the 1930s. He saw it as a challenge to the place of higher education in American society, and an opportunity for higher education to evaluate, a " necessity of a reassessment of its own values and programs", in his 1934's Commencement address, hopefully titled, "This Year of Promise". At times philosophical, Chase addresses the 1930s as a "great and challenging opportunity," for a "clarification of what education as a whole is about." It is a move away from "a great deal of discrimination," to "a new deal in education."

Chase was essentially framing an economic issue in socially liberal terms. The university needed to increase its enrollment during the Depression. Frusciano and Pettit note NYU's policy changes in the 1930s when "NYU made a critical decision to become a service agency, an educational institution that served the diverse social and economic interests of the community...registration continued to climb right up the entry of the United States into World War II in 1941" (179). NYU subsequently eased their previously restrictive enrollment, welcoming students of diverse socioeconomic and religious backgrounds. Yet, this diversity had its limits- and did not dramatically include students of color. When Wilbert Warren graduates from his program, he is the only black man in his graduating class of art students.

Warren's enrollment at NYU highlights the question of, as Chancellor Chase put it, "what education is all about." Is its purpose to simply provide training for the students' agency and vision, or to provide the vision itself? The answer came through government money and influence. In an attempt to increase enrollment, NYU, along with many other regional universities, worked with the government for finances, particularly in educating future servicepersons. Although the U.S. government would soon begin to work with

higher education to streamline educational services (primarily in engineering and other sciences) for future military recruits (Frusciano and Pettit), fields in the humanities like Fine Arts still continually suffered low enrollment, jeopardizing their future existence as college programs. Colleges were forced to consider whether they could make education in the arts about a focus on technical skills that promised professional positions, or continue to elevate the arts as a talent-driven discipline.

Chancellor Chase's address at the annual dinner of the College Art Association advocated for the arts' necessary role in liberal education, despite declining enrollment, "we need then, an increased sense of the importance of the fine arts as an avenue not only to technical proficiency but as a requisite and necessary part of a liberal education….in other words I think we make a great mistake when we talk about the success and failure of college education primarily in terms of its record in the professions...its central purpose…..is a cultural purpose and in that the arts are playing an increasing part". While this sounds like a push against government attempts to focus on technical training in academia, it is more clearly a sign that government influence in NYU, through the arts, could move past mere financial involvement, or training military recruits, into a "cultural purpose": national propaganda. The "cultural purpose" of the university's art program seemed to run largely on the prestige of NYU as an elite institution rather than the value of an arts education and degree in the WWII era. Marrying this prestige to government's message, of American values of liberation and freedom however, I argue, provided an opportunity for government messaging and artistic talent to meld together, and submerge national propaganda inside the nurturing of artistic vision and talent.

The 1930s was a time of serious economic crisis for NYU's art programs. In a time where there was a question of the value of art education, both economically and culturally, Warren's education was sponsored by a system that emphasized skill and prestige supposedly for an increasingly diverse student body. However, the reality was declining enrollment in the arts, and a still largely white student population, educated in a liberal arts education, often to become recruits or employees of government agencies during the war. On one hand, NYU's involvement with the government to increase student enrollment to benefit national agendas
meant that there was an increasing amount of students available for enrollment. Yet, in the face of increasing the diversity of its student body, NYU pledges its elite status and "prestige", causes that would not withstand its financial losses. Ironically, the few students of color inside the university prove this statement as glaringly deficient. For NYU students of color in the arts, NYU, despite this pledge to artistic integrity, was providing an education that aligned comfortably with governmental agendas. So, the institutional whiteness of ASL, NYU, and the US national agenda continued uninterrupted. Like ASL, the whiteness of NYU's institution was not only represented in its student body, but in its sponsorship of Warren and other minority students, positioning their marginalized statuses as indicative of institutional liberalism, and recruiting them into a national body that proclaimed the same goals of progress and freedom of thought.

Warren and the WPA

The government's New Deal programs, which radically focused on the arts as a national endeavor, often worked with schools like NYU to recruit artists for governmental work. Indeed, Masood Warren worked for the WPA from 1935-39 as a

sculptor, while he was enrolled at NYU. During that time, in 1937, Chancellor Chase of NYU served as Chairman for the Borough of Manhattan's Federal Art Project Center. The WPA proved useful for NYU in other capacities, as partners in education programs and courses, like the one that saw the NY Department Board of Education, NYU and WPA partnered to train teachers. Despite Chancellor Chase's concern over governmental censure of academic freedom, NYU continued to work with the WPA until the government decentralized the Federal Art Project in 1939, and Warren's work with the WPA ended.

The WPA's focus, unlike ASL or NYU, was an ambitiously realized attempt to marry social value to artistic vision. I argue that however, like the ASL and NYU, the WPA also demonstrated the government's investment in institutional whiteness by the use of racially neutral terms, now in terms of citizenship and civic duty. The WPA's involvement in art education, coupled with private universities like NYU meant that art was, hegemonically, now viewed in terms of its purpose: what it could provide the nation. The Federal Art Project began clearly on such ideological terms as "an attempt to reconstruct 'society' around the bases of citizenship, law and national culture...this was necessarily a hegemonic process" (Harris 12). Where NYU and the ASL's administration emphasized skill developed and talent-driven individual art, the Federal Art Project's administrators emphasized cultural citizenship and social obligation over talent or individual identity, "'artist' 'woman' and 'negro' could be seen as links in a chain of equivalents articulated by and to the organizing notion of citizenship" (Harris 9). The New Deal administrators saw a direct connection between political citizenship and its rights, and cultural citizenship, and its obligations, "equal rights and social

responsibilities to the state as embodiment of the will of the people required a reciprocal cultural citizenship based on similarly equal and open access" (Harris 62). The Works Progress Administration recruited many artists of color, providing both jobs and art materials. Its "hegemonic principle" was a definition of the federal and state involvement as "a rational and neutral instrument" (Harris 8).

This sponsorship of artists of color came at a price.The nature of a governmental sponsorship of art meant censorship of projects and ideas deemed leftist or 'communist', even erasing and destroying art already commissioned. By 1939, the Federal Art Project was decentralized. The Work Projects Administration Art program became the War Services Program in March of 1942. When the WPA was decentralized, around 80 percent of stateside art projects were now produced for the National Defense Program. Rather than make murals for school buildings, or sculptures for public offices, artists now drew for instructional manuals for the military, and worked on camouflage design. Many artist groups moved to uncritically support the U.S. war effort. What the New Deal programs brought to the arts was not only economic support for artists, but the beginnings of national and international hegemony in art investment, redefining the role of artists in the process. The artist's primary obligation was now about "fulfilling duties of citizenship and authentically working for the nation and state during wartime" (Harris 151). Primarily, WPA's close partnership with private institutions like NYU, popularized the idea of the artist-citizen, one whose artistic vision would closely and uncritically align with national goals during warfare. Furthermore, it indicated that that the battleground for the ideological push for WWII, of a liberal democratic nation, would rest with the

producers of culture, artists like Masood Warren, but only if their vision aligned with the national one.

While there is no archival record of Warren's own opinions on his institutional experience, I align his experience with institutional whiteness through ASL, NYU, and the government from the WPA to the military as strikingly similar sponsorships. Despite the seemingly disparate aims of private and national institutions, Warren's training and experience demonstrates that hegemonic whiteness in the WWII era stayed constant, and carried over to his military experience as well. Warren was sponsored by hegemonic forces of whiteness, couched in liberal language of artistic freedom, artistic skill, and the national agenda for the citizen-artist. Throughout, art education and sponsorship is presented in racially neutral terms, coded as "prestige" and "skill", which were unevenly available for artists of color. This sponsorship of black artists like Warren required a muting of the material realities of a person of color, all while recruiting black artists like Warren in the name of diversity and equality.

Warren's institutional training in art education emphasized their "neutrality", but institutional policy and monetary practice demonstrated a specific concern about the individual's obligations as citizen rather than the agency or artistic vision of the artist. I argue that this indicates that the artist's identity as a person of color, in a continually unequal society, would be submerged beneath his obligations as a citizen of a nation of contradiction: promoting freedom while restricting it.

It was the job of the federal artist to "interpret America" for the general public, and he/she did so with what Federal Art Project Director Holger Cahill called an attempt to "recover a usable past" (qtd in Harris 90). On the government's payroll, Warren went

from being classified a “sculptor”, in 1935, specific to his artistic training, to the generic “artist”, by the end of the WPA program. How an “artist” was defined by the American government, in service to national goals, determined the artist’s scope of work, and how he “saw” his subjects. His training and artistic vision was secondary. For example, the tourism industry of the 1930s, buoyed by Federally sponsored art, constructed Native and black Americans as a marketable product and, “promote a sense of national unity that simultaneously included and disenfranchised both Native and African Americans” (Pillen 60). WPA posters promoted “See America”, a series of promotions to encourage tourism within America. The visual products of this campaign produced essentially a form of ethnic tourism, focusing on images of white Americans, and reduced African Americans and Native Americans to visual props or relics of a primitive way of life (Pillen).This further positions what the “right to look” can imply for a federally-employed black artist such as Warren. Despite the social progressive reputation of the WPA and New Deal programs, which paid for and recruited artists of color, black artists like Warren were restricted in their roles as artists for the US government. Their “right to look”, and subsequent public authorship of artwork, was shaped double-fold by their employment status, and their material reality. Their art, and persona, became public, and owned by the public, and so, they were defined as American artists: ones who worked in the social realist method, art that had a citizen-purpose. Asymmetrical authorship therefore has to index this disconnect between what Warren ended up representing, institutionally determined and distributed, which might have been different from how he “saw” the visual scene.

Warren's art in the military

In the United States' entry into WWII, the American military was also another example of such institutional control and contradiction. The military was still segregated at the beginning of WWII, and when Warren was in the Armed forces, he was in a segregated unit, as a sergeant in the Quartermaster Corps. His noncommissioned officer status is likely due to his level of education. Although blacks were drafted into the WWII military, they were often not allowed to leave stateside duty, serve in integrated forces or command white soldiers, and were rarely placed overseas. The American government was concerned about the tension between national Jim Crow policies and international relaxation of such societal rules, and some countries, like Australia, Britain, China and the West Indies, requested that no black US soldiers be sent to their countries (Wynn 51). Thus, although America publicly proclaimed their entrance into WWII as a pursuit of liberation and freedom from German and Japanese intolerance, their internal policies relied on unequal training, treatment, and positions for American soldiers of color. For a black U.S. soldier like Warren, the institutional agenda, now national, would once again clash with his personal reality, a cognitive dissonance that reached back to his experience with institutional whiteness. This dissonance in what I call the "no man's land" of military service, becomes the site of his asymmetrical authorship.

It is my view that Warren's asymmetrical authorship during his military service clearly documents his own authorship of his "right to look", or his active engagement with the experience of institutional whiteness and white sight.This can be defined as both a re-looking, a critical resistance in viewing practices, and a looking 'back', at whiteness in practice, an identification of 'white sight' for what it is. He did this in ways that,

firstly, complicate notions of the public and private sphere, secondly, in iterative representations of bodies that counter the abstract national subject, the military serviceperson, and finally, my assemblage of his works redefines the nature of historical archive as practice. The hegemonic nature of institutional whiteness, now represented by the military, labeled all soldiers as deracinated national subjects. Although Warren could not counter this portrayal openly as a service member, his cataloguing of sketches of black soldiers in various activities, in a private sphere, could do the work. Through asymmetrical authoring, Warren fills the fissures that exist between national subject and material reality for the black soldier. The iterative nature of his sketches, engages with the repeated iterations of whiteness he has encountered in his educational experience, ones that refused to mark the bodies of color that made up their institutions and their material realities. In effect, Warren's sketches are an engagement with WWII's white sight, which claimed the abstract national subject, the icon of the American soldier, as white.

The black body as national subject

The whiteness of the American public, and by extension, the American military in the WWII era, is not in dispute. However, whiteness did not only take the form of the bodies of the majority of American citizens, both as civilian and military subjects. It also presented itself in forms of legal and social inequalities faced by American bodies of color. Jim Crow policies continued inside and outside the American military, even within draft regulations, establishing quotas of acceptable numbers of black soldiers. Often, however, segregation and its inequalities were rendered invisible by laws that declared that blacks would partake in military service since, "in a free society the obligations and

privileges of military training and service should be shared…with a fair and just system of selective compulsory military training and service" (Selective Service Act of 1940), but proceeded to exclude black men from service commensurate with their ability or training on logistical grounds.

Many black soldiers were also excluded from military service for arbitrary reasons, and via an educational exam for the Selective Service, which overlooked that black recruits were the products of the structural inequity of a segregated public educational system. Those who were drafted or accepted into the Armed Forces, found themselves relegated to largely menial labor stateside, in segregated facilities and camps, often in the rigidly conservative and racist American southern states. When leaving military bases, black soldiers often faced racial threats and retaliations from the civilian populace. Black veterans faced discriminatory hiring practices from Veteran services, and at times, threats of lynching and death. These examples of entrenched racist practices that benefited from murky legal language indicate that WWII era whiteness both proclaimed a liberation and equality in language, using the recruitment of bodies of color to justify its ideology, while restricting these bodies access to the very same ideals. In such a system, black bodies were only permitted access into a visual culture as submerged into the militant body- stripped unrecognizable of domestic inequalities, or simply invisible in popular renderings of WWII heroes. This oblique exclusion of black bodies, a trait of institutional whiteness, heightens the weight and prevalence of WWII's visual culture, and its visual images of the white American soldier. In contrast, we have Warren's efforts to represent his own "right to look", a visual mode of bodies of color inside the national body.

Warren's sketches of black soldiers work against this body of white visual culture in military service. Social inequality placed him, a man with a college degree, in service stateside rather than in command overseas. However, this position provided him the opportunity to sketch others in the same circumstance: black men, soldiers, citizens, and WWII participants. The black body in the 1930s and 40s, as represented in art, was either exploited in nostalgic folk renditions of slavery in American art, exoticized in African primitivism, or erased from visual representations of American culture. Warren's continuous sketches recorded black reality during WWII in a manner that was unique: they were representations of ordinary black bodies in national service, neither heroic nor exoticized. In effect, they worked against the erasure of black reality perpetuated by WWII visual culture.

It is visual culture's purpose to "proliferate representations...as representations proliferate, the visual register's claims to truth weaken" (Mierzoff 45). If military whiteness presented the American militant body as white heroes, Warren's daily sketches proved a private contestation of that image, weakening it. However, the asymmetrical nature of Warren's authorship, in a private sphere, means that it cannot directly engage with the white sight of WWII visual culture. The researcher's unearthing and connecting of this visual archive, of soldiers of color and their authorship, produces something new: a parallel narrative of WWII. When "White sight", as part of military whiteness, saw blacks are part of the militant body, their bodies were unregistered or unrecognized as individuals outside the military purpose. It was a denial of their black realities.

The work of the researcher is to devise an analytical practice to make connections that are otherwise obscured. Not only is the black "right to look" effaced during WWII,

the intensity of the effacement means that, in the present day, the researcher has to perform extra labor to bring these cultural practices of asymmetrical authorship to light. Asymmetrical authorship then takes on additional dimensions in terms of the politics of knowledge, that is, the organization of bodies of knowledge and ways of knowing. My excavation of Warren's archive as asymmetrical practices of authoring, then, works in conjunction with the author of this knowledge (Warren himself), and the audience, which includes academic fields like Veterans Studies, Writing studies, American studies, and WWII visual culture.

Warren's "right to look " resisted white sight through recurring representations of the black military body, in effect placing them into the national imaginary. In addition, the unearthing and cataloguing of Warren's work inside a publicly held archive, and the researcher's connection to a larger narrative, destabilizes the narrative of WWII whiteness, presenting private realities of black soldiers and their work inside the military body.

The noniconicity of sketches

The "icon" in art is best defined as a representation of a popularized figure, connecting visual portraiture and historical likeness. However, art as iconology has its drawbacks, when evaluated as a part of visual culture, as W.J.T. Mitchell asks, the "*object* (the visual image) entraps its discourse and method in tautological "likenesses" between visual images and historical totalities... Is iconology….incapable of registering the "faults" in culture, the fractures in representation, and the resistance of spectators?" (Mitchell 23) In the civil rights era, iconography did the work of patriotism through figures such as Martin Luther King, as a "noble image, a moral image", and "upholds an

ideology of democratic and capitalistic progress“ (Fleetwood 46). Such artwork can also function as propaganda to advance the idea of American progressivism in the 1930s and 40s, as in WPA art, or the fame of black Navy member Dorie Miller, who saved lives during Pearl Harbor, and was subsequently used to represent American diversity and freedom. When it comes to registering subjects of color in the U.S. military, subjects whose bodily realities are erased in the national endeavor, iconography would not find or represent these subjects with authenticity or nuance. As Mitchell notes, it can prove “incapable of registering the ‘faults’ of culture”, collapsing differences and tensions into an opaque image.

Warren’s WWII-era sketches are not of any famous figures, unlike his post-military public works of figures like Joe Louis. As such, they will not register in the public sphere in recognizable ways. They are anonymous soldiers of color, sketched in their daily occupation. Some are working at typewriters, others are standing in military dress, holding their weapons. Others sit in repose, smoking or talking. As loose sketches, two details are continually emphasized about these bodies: their color, and their work inside the military apparatus. As such, Warren’s repeated sketches of unidentified soldiers of color can be considered figures of “non-iconicity” (Fleetwood). Unlike the power of the icon, non-iconicity is a “representational practice that normalize[s] black lived subjects” (Fleetwood 47). Despite WWII visual culture’s emphasis on the white American soldier, Warren was presenting, over and over again, examples of what the American soldier looked like *in his view*, and what he/she did in everyday practice, in contestation of the normalized image. This artistic practice is marked not only by iterative sketches, but by his efforts to both catalogue and number them, while situating the scenes

in national service. As such, his repeated sketches, including an ordering and patterning of the drawings, are unacknowledged practices of asymmetrical authorship.

Most remarkably, Warren sketched these pictures during his time as a government employee of the U.S. military, in a deeply contested and destabilizing 'no man's land' of identity and belonging for servicemen of color. And so, these sketches are examples of his artistic authorship within the militant body. Unlike his work in the WPA, Warren's sketches in the military remained private, and there, he was able to challenge his status in American society while functioning as a member of the same society, a clear example of cultural citizenship.

The iterative nature of Warren's cataloguing of his sketches, and its non-iconic subjects, makes his sketches of these black subjects not only a reclamation of his "right to look", an authorship that demonstrates the lives and material realities of the black subject in a deracinated zone of whiteness, but also an on-going production that combats the onslaught of white sight in WWII's visual culture. In doing so, Warren creates a parallel historical archive, one that is produced inside institutional whiteness, but due to its private sphere, will not be absorbed by it. It is both a challenge and a claim to cultural citizenship.

Since they remained in private sketchbooks during his lifetime, the artist was both the audience and the spectator of this work. This closed circuit of creator and audience meant that these noniconic bodies were rendered meaningful through Warren's own act of looking and sketching. Through his selection of subjects, and rendering of their bodies, he distilled the necessity of the black body, both in American art and in American national culture. Now its inclusion in an African American archive, publically catalogued

(at Beinecke in Yale University), invites researchers to make meaning and connections out of Warren's asymmetrical authorship, to use the "right to look", and participate in its archival excavation and restoration into WWII's visual culture.

The Text/Image as "representational static"

For a black soldier and artist, the legacy of an entanglement with white supremacy is work that remains oblique and unrecognized as a direct reckoning with whiteness. The asymmetrical nature of Warren's authorship, here in the private sphere of sketchbooks, meant that it would not be a direct challenge to whiteness. Nonetheless, there is an opening where text parallels image that provides us an example of how this tension can be productive space, where the reader-critic can construct meaning to bolster this parallel archive of WWII's servicepersons of color.

In her analysis of contemporary black artists' use of the text of slave narratives, Janet Neary posits that the artists " juxtapose two paradigms of black subjectivity- the visual and the literary- through two historical paradigms...to undermine visual fictions of race and notions of what it means to be an 'authentically black subject'" (160). So a blurring of genre, a visual/literary combination of texts, is a necessary move for some black artists. It is addressing a divide inherited from a eurocentric, white-centered West on their terms and it also changes the nature of how we discuss authorship as primarily text-based. The similar work of a WWII-era artist necessitates the inclusion of a reader/critic to retrace these authorial moves. I have to bolster this connection to reveal Warren's asymmetrical move of authorship as a blurring of genres/purpose, a move he makes because of limits and erasures he faced within institutional whiteness. Warren's visual and written representations of black bodies in everyday military life and a distinct animal

sketch read in combination with a letter to another soldier, demonstrates his claiming of his "right to look". The "right to look" is twofold, both as the artist's gaze on black bodies, and the right of the black bodies *to be looked at*, visualizing the black body that has been erased by military whiteness.

On April 16, 1942, Sergeant Masood Ali Warren wrote a letter to John Henrik Clarke, also a Sergeant in the Armed Forces. Both men were black soldiers, educated, recruited reluctantly into service in segregated camps for WWII service. Warren's letterhead shows that he was in Savannah, Georgia on Savannah Air Base. In his handwriting, underneath the printed winged shield, the Army Air Forces pilot wings, Warren writes in his company: "770th Quartermasters", a pointed example of his writing-in of his place inside the American military. Warren's handwritten inclusion of his company name on the pre-typed letterhead, is, I argue, a textual contestation and visual authorship of the erasure of the work of black soldiers during WWII, whose work stateside remained marginalized and devalued in the WWII narrative of valor and liberation.

The letter begins, after an address to Clarke, not with the commonalities of service life, but rather a personal note about a female acquaintance, "you perhaps by now [are] informed of her attack by a sex-mad paleface. You can imagine how I feel about it". The rest of his letter discusses the unequal accomodations on base, "we live in tents in an isolated section [be]neath the long-needled pines and moss-hanging trees.….some life, eh?" Much like his sketches, Warren's recordings of everyday existence for black soldiers are completely about his "right to look". They are not just making the black body visible, but making the black body and its material experience an ordinary part of the

world, rather than an exotic aberration. Notwithstanding the remarkably painful incident that Warren mentions here first, and the written silence in the elision of suffering, it is remarkable for being a clear example of what commonalities black soldiers shared primarily: the parallel effects of racial and systemic violence on both themselves and others they knew.

I make a connection between this letter to another black G.I., and two of Warren's sketches inside military life, both done on the same day. The first sketch, dated April 16th, 1942, is a quick sketch in pencil of three figures (Fig. 1). Foregrounded is a standing black man, in a hat, holding a stick-like object horizontally. Two other men are in the background. One is bent down, and his head is hidden, but his work, also holding a similar horizontal object, is the focus. The second man, in a military hat, is in the halfway position between standing erect and crouching. The positioning of the three men is of workers in their moment of work, the foregrounded figure appearing in a supervisory role. The second sketch is not of men, but a remarkably detailed side-profile of the head of a male lion (Fig. 2). In Warren's hundreds of sketches, there are only a few sketches of animals, and none as detailed as this one. The Beaux-Arts design movement, as reflected in Warren's NYU and ASL training, had an emphasis not only on figure drawings, but also animal figures such as lions, often drawn from plaster casts or visits to the local area zoos. Often animals were often used as anthropomorphic figures, representing valor of human beings since Greek and Roman art. This juxtaposition of the black men at work and the lion creates a strategic dissonance between institutional whiteness, as exemplified by Warren's training and reference to the Beaux-Arts movement through the lion image, and bodily representations of blackness, through the sketch of soldiers at work. Warren

renders the everyday nature of black bodies laboring in national service (which uses their bodies for an ideology of progress) as a part of WWII's visual culture, claiming the black servicemen's right to be seen. Warren's lion sketch similarly registers his artist's "right to look" within white spaces and institutions (particularly significant in the lion's gaze directed away from the viewer/reader, an asymmetrical/indirect engagement), while he remains a subject of this sponsorship.

Warren's act of authoring, a presentation of both text and image, are parts of an important archive that I argue we must connect as examples of asymmetrical authorship. These examples address the meaning of blackness inside the military apparatus of WWII. As Janet Neary analyzes the overlaying of text and image as a representation of black subjectivity, I involve the reader-critic in the construction of a new historical archive. I connect the two forms of authoring by Warren here, via text and image, on their notions of blackness and subjectivity, doing a work that the body of the archive itself does not do on its own isolated terms. The text and image, represent, in textual ellison and silence, the recording of authentic experience of blacks in WWII: an artist demonstrating his institutional skillset, in response to a painful experience with racial inequality, within a national body that does not permit open dissent. The text and image represent, in visual practice, what the artist "looks" at and sees- the work of identity and belonging.

Although not a direct translation between mediums like the art Neary examines, Warren's visual and textual authoring do reclaim this "right to look", and "demand a shifting gaze that unsettles the unidirectionality of the white subject gazing on a black object: reflecting, deflecting, doubling, or turning the racial gaze inward" (Neary 159). Both text and image are remarkable for what they leave out, in their ambiguities of

situational violence, WWII-era inequalities. The connections between text and image, connections that I make explicit, demonstrate Warren's remarkable institutional training, rooted in whiteness and white sight.

I combine Warren's text and image, on the same timeline as an example of asymmetrical authorship as critical cultural citizenship : an act of creation unearthed, inside a militant body that attempts to submerge and erase the material realities of bodies of color. While it does not produce concrete answers of what it means to be a black man inside this system, Warren's authoring does question the notions of blackness and belonging on multiple levels, ones that I attempt to unearth and connect. This "representational static"- "strategic moments of dissonance between multiple discourses of authenticity- ... reveal the limits of each mode to express racialized experience...revealing blackness itself to be discursively produced" (Neary 160).

In my reading of Neary, Warren's black identity, his artistic identity, and his soldier identity are not discrete forms localized within respective institutions of sponsorship, but combine in contradictory ways. Warren's sketches of black soldiers at work, his letter to Clarke and the strategic dissonance between his training and his military experience, as demonstrated in the resulting sketches, are an archive of asymmetrical authorship. Warren's artwork, training and my unearthing also demonstrates how asymmetrical authorship engages not just the original author, but also the reader-critic, to construct meaning and forming a counter-narrative.

The 'static' and tension of representation in this WWII work is only realized when the archive is excavated and examined, since asymmetrical authorship does its work in implicit and private spheres and genres. This is work that is not public but also

not publicized, work that does not just fail to get registered by "white sight" as instances of agency/art/writing, but is also not given publicity/promoted by white sight. Warren's sketchbooks, his concurrent text and image, and my attempt to stitch them into the visual culture of WWII, demonstrate how "critical" cultural citizenship works- within fissures and gaps, challenging the accepted narrative of American nationalism. In doing so, I argue that Warren's asymmetrical authorship asks us to consider the archive in terms of first, the artist's practice, and now, the researcher's: the work of assembling an unexamined narrative. To rather accept the notions of blackness produced in WWII's visual culture of whiteness is to handle a static image, one that places black identity in discrete pockets of inequality or exoticism in American society, shelved and archived, to be forgotten. To view the black American soldier inside this system of whiteness, it is necessary to excavate the archive of authorship, and grapple with these "moments of dissonance" as productively as Warren does himself.

Chapter Four: Missing Pages in No Man's Land: John Henrik Clarke's military mentorship in soldier letters as asymmetrical authorship

As I discuss in previous chapters, the mythic narrative of WWII presented the war as a national endeavor to preserve American ideals of liberation, freedom and democratic progress. This ideology was, however, at odds with the bodily reality and experience of the black soldier inside the US military. The military draft ensured that any physically able man of age, regardless of color, was to be recruited into what I call the "militant body", the military group of recruits, read as one entity, whose primary focus is on nationalistic goals. The black soldier is recruited into the maintenance of the national American myth of exceptionalism, while his racialized body disrupted this narrative of whiteness, as a body that was not seen or acknowledged in terms of cultural citizenship, without a right to participate fully in the democratic system.

It is my argument that black military service in WWII functioned as a disruptor to the perception of the black body as American citizen by muddying the waters of what could be defined as national belonging. This disruption occurs primarily in what I term a "no man's land"- a space where the black military body exists, in which his subjectivity is never fully defined or registered as intelligible. Historical studies of the black soldier in WWII recognize black soldiers as second-class citizens, both inside and outside the military (Wynn; McGuire; James). I argue rather that military service places black soldier-citizens and their work in a "no man's land", where the black soldier, and his agency, is rendered unintelligible, unregistered, unrecognizable within existing discourses. The black soldier-citizen's authorial moves, what I term "asymmetrical"

authorship, occurred in private spheres such as letter writing or in invisible labor of community-building like black veteran mentorship, spheres and genres unrecognized in dominant discourses. These works of black veterans are productions that are often unrecognized as practices of cultural citizenship, but they demonstrate very clearly how black veterans "wrote back", demonstrating not only black agency inside a system of whiteness, but destabilizing the narrative of whiteness as a national project.

Black authorship in the WWII era

Previous studies on black writing in WWII have taken the position that black literary output after the 1940s challenged societal racial inequality as a domestic war, and WWII as a continuation of the same system of inequality rather than a fight for freedom and democratic ideals. As such, they did not see military service or membership as pronouncedly different from civilian society and its ills, but rather an extension of the same.

Studies on black authorship post-WWII focus on black literary output, seen in black masculinist novels such as Chester Himes' *If He Hollers* (1945), or John Oliver Killens' *And Then We Heard the Thunder* (1962), and in Richard Wright's *Native Son* (1940). Such works address blackness in America, and the recruitment of blacks into WWII. They resist the idea of war service as a prerequisite for equal rights as black citizens, again, seeing nothing remarkable about military service that would proclaim the advent of black civil rights. Many black authors saw the black American during the 1940s as continuing the struggle for civil rights and dignity, in the long arc of American history, unbroken by WWII. Other black intellectuals took the fight internationally, seeing Pan-Africanism and black internationalism as their war, outside the national

agenda of whiteness. In effect, post-WWII works by black writers present the black man's plight in what Richard Wright described as, "hovering unwanted between two worlds- between powerful America and his own stunted place in life...this 'No Man's Land'" (xxiv). The 'no man's land' evokes the spectre of whiteness, but now in military terms, as something both visible and invisible.

Asymmetrical Authorship as black authorship

For the black military man, whiteness was a space that he inhabited as a recruit into the nationalist agenda, but a space where he was rendered unintelligible: a no man's land. While Wright describes an essential reality for the Black American, I argue that his wartime metaphor has wider implications, particularly for soldiers of color in the American military. No man's land was not simply a space he inhabited as a recruit, mirroring civilian life, a second class citizen. He both participated in a nationalist endeavor for liberation as agent, and was governed by the segregational policies that rendered him an inferior subject. This dual position of agent/subject did not provide him two identities, but seemingly no recognized identity. Although this no man's land was fraught with the perils of white supremacy, and the resulting loss of definitive identity for the soldier of color, I argue that this no man's land also proved to be a productive space for authorship for black soldier citizens. It is a space where the black citizen soldier can render his realities, through what I call an "asymmetrical" form of response to whiteness.

In the system of whiteness, black soldiers would be rendered the "other", defined as "not part of the norm", against the "same" of white citizenship. Such definition in opposition to whiteness as the norm is, as Clevis Headley puts it, an "epistemic imperialism", a form of oppressive storytelling that only defines the black soldier by what

he is not. In such epistemology, he is not recognized as a person or as a citizen. He is a black body inside a nationalistic enterprise of whiteness. This is possible in the space of no man's land, which erased the narrative of black material reality while it recruited the same soldiers into the work of whiteness. I argue that black soldiers re-inscribed the national black identity through authorship in this no man's land, against a national agenda that rendered them invisible and used their bodies, without providing them full citizen rights. Extending Headley's theoretical reworking of whiteness from the Africana perspective, I argue that the "Other", the black soldier, authors his own existence and purpose, albeit in an "asymmetrical" way, through nontraditional genres and systems of authorship, in soldier letters and the invisible labor of soldier mentorship.

Asymmetrical authorship is asymmetrical by definition because the power structure of the black writer is not the same as the white. Black asymmetrical authorship carved out a space of its own that resists and contests the hegemony of whiteness. Black authorship, particularly while the author remains a subject of its imperial power, cannot address whiteness on equal terms within it. Instead, black authorship stakes a different claim, by creating its own sphere of discourse, albeit not on an equal playing field.

John Henrik Clarke and soldier letters

This chapter analyzes excerpts from private black soldier and veteran letters to and from John Henrik Clarke, Africana studies founder, to examine this concept of asymmetrical authorship in no man's land. Letter writing has been seen as a flexible form that yields many new genres, a dynamic process that narrates and records social practices (Hall & Barton). Black American letter writing has also been examined in the context of literacy as liberatory, providing black citizens self-determination, identity, and self-

advocacy.[1] However, personal letter writing between black veterans has not been examined in the context of response to whiteness. In that vein, I contextualize these soldier letters within the history of cultural citizenship for black Americans during WWII, particularly in light of the experiential realities of segregation de jure. I ask the questions: How can Clarke's thinking and writing in these letters represent his imaginings of the black citizen inside a military recruited into whiteness? How did WW II's black veterans use language to present their reality in letter writing to other veterans, and how did this asymmetrical authorship push back against the mythic monolith of the "Greatest Generation" in subversive ways? In what ways does Clarke's communal mentorship with fellow veterans and his writings during his military career develop his future role as the founder of Africana studies, and his eventual allegiance to Pan-Africanism? Finally, how did Clarke's mentorship and communication with vets complicate the image of black identity in the 1940s, and how can we dialogue with these ideas today, with the growing presence of veterans of color in the United States Armed Forces?

This chapter focuses on how Clarke's profound influence in Africana studies also owes a great debt to his time as an enlisted master sergeant in the U.S. Army Air Forces during WWII. After his military career, Clarke mentored a group of black soldiers and veterans, and helped them transition to civilian life. His archival papers also include correspondence with these men, which shed light on the invisible laboring of black mentorship and communal work. Clarke's own correspondence in his archives indicates that military labor and its overlap with the labor of writing, particularly in soldier letters,

[1] Blackmon, Phillip O'Brien. *Literacy, protest, and empowerment: 19th & 20th Century African-American letter-writing rhetoric*. 2010.University of Louisville, PhD Dissertation. *ProQuest.*

created productive spaces of communal mentorship and black mentorship for black veterans. This is particularly significant in contrast to the segregational and blatantly hostile political and social environment for black veterans in American society post WWII. Clarke's practice of building a black veteran community through soldier letters has remained hitherto unrecognized as an essential component of his eventual activist and historical work, as these activities remain unregistered in these dominant disciplinary discourses. I argue that his military service and subsequent mentorship can be seen as a building block in his eventual construction of Africana studies as a discipline, a mix of scholarship and communal practice, one that is what Adam Banks would call "a community text that emerges from everyday activities and interactions"(51).

Clarke is considered the forerunner of the field of Africana studies, a discipline he helped create in academia. Africana Studies is a multi-disciplinary study of the histories, cultures, practices and political movements of Africa and the African global diaspora. His global discourses with world leaders and scholars such as Cheikh Diop and Arturo Schomburg and his scholarly involvement in African-American literature and Africana studies are well documented (Boyd; Harris Jr., Person-Lynn). Clarke, among other black intellectuals of his time, was an autodidact, self-educated in black history in a time where many universities and graduate programs did not organize black studies as a discipline, or offer educational resources like archives or other research sources to students of Africana studies. During pivotal cultural movements such as the Harlem Renaissance and the Black Power movement of the 1960s, Clarke advocated for a systematic study of Africans in world history, eventually founding and chairing Black and Puerto Rican studies at Hunter College for the City University of New York. Clarke's subsequent

training and learning in Africana studies followed an independent vein, in the tradition of Africana scholarship and learning that worked outside academia.[2]

Clarke was a strong advocate for Africana scholarship, bringing independent Africana research into academia's halls. He often acted as literary agent, introducing books on African history like Cheikh Diop's *The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality* (1974) and reprints of deGraft-Johnson's *African Glory* to American publishing as some of the first African history texts used in academia. He counted as his friends and colleagues, various internationally known intellectuals, activists, academics and publishers like Malcolm X, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Hoyt W. Fuller, managing editor of Johnson Publishing Company magazine *Black World*, Alioune Diop, founding editor of *Presence Africaine*, although his home base remained in Harlem, New York. That Clarke's base remained in America while his focus was on Africana global studies is not unimportant, despite his own assertions that Africana studies are a necessity for a black population that finds no home of their own inside American history. Clarke pointed to his mentor Schomburg's pivotal words as the impetus for his own desire to work for Africana studies when he said that black history was, "nothing more than the missing pages of world history" (Boyd 50). Yet, there are "missing pages" in Clarke's own work that are not often studied, and these are his wartime military experiences and correspondence. Clarke's own personal history, particularly his time in the American military, indicates that the national space for black identity and authorship cannot be prematurely evacuated for black internationalism, and is in fact, tied to Clarke's own envisioning of black identity and culture.

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[2] Toure, Ahati N.N. *John Henrik Clarke and the Power of Africana History: Africalogical Quest for Decolonization and Sovereignty*. Africana World Press, 2008.

Soldier letter writing as asymmetrical authorship

Asymmetrical authorship, and how it does the work of negotiating black identity stateside, is best seen in Clarke's private soldier letters, in nontraditional genres of writing within private, closed communities. Unlike other black soldier letters addressed to newspapers or politicians[3], Clarke's own soldier letters and the letters of other veterans addressed to him are within private spheres, and do a different work.

These letters claim asymmetrical authorship in three ways. Primarily, they record and reproduce conversations on belonging, societal tensions, and individual moves of authorship as members of the national apparatus of whiteness while remaining outside its public discourse. By definition, these black veterans are rearticulating the black identity, particularly the black national identity, through these asymmetrical moves. These are individual moves of ownership resisting the national apparatus.

Secondly, unlike the vociferous and active forms of explicit protest in the civilian sphere, these letters use the rhetorical move of strategic silence, often in places where moral and physical injury and social status are concerned. In the private sphere of letter writing, this community becomes this "band of brothers", a place of valuable black mentorship. In this sphere, silence, a refusal to explicitly label and speak about issues that black soldiers faced inside the institution of the military, communicates as displacement, an asymmetrical authorial move.

Finally, like the term "stealth veteran" is evoked to explain the relative silence of the modern day American veteran in the civilian sphere post-military life, WWII black veterans can be considered the prototypes of such a classification, as black intellectuals

[3] See McGuire, Philip. *Taps for a Jim Crow Army. Letters from Black Soldiers in World War II.* Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio,1983.

such as Clarke were often reluctant to identify themselves as veterans of America's wars. Most importantly, their dismissal of their military service comes from a deeper disidentification with a military of whiteness, while their authorship does other work: it takes steps to counter the production of whiteness with a private building of black cultural citizenship.

As defined by Renato Rosaldo, cultural citizenship is, "the right to be different, and to belong in a participatory democratic sense" (402). Academics have elaborated on cultural citizenship by separating citizenship from legal definitions and paired them with cultural practices and expressions of belonging, such as traditional singing and poetry in the Highlands of the Sumba, Indonesia (Kuipers) and diasporic communities such as Filipino gay men and performance as belonging (Manalansan).

However, the work of Clarke's soldier letters does not divorce legal citizenship from cultural citizenship, as black American soldiers are citizens by legal definition. Therefore, such private black veteran letters did not previously register in this discourse. This chapter positions the letter writing as an asymmetrical move, a rewriting of how citizenship is defined on the terms of the black soldier. These letters are doing more work than just writing for communication- they are social practices of critical cultural citizenship, the "missing pages" that redefine and illustrate the complexities of what it means to be both inside and outside the American body.

The Black Soldier Citizen

World War II and the drafting of American citizens for a second global war with segregated armed forces produced concerns for the black draftee, and the black community. A 1942 Office of War Information report indicated that pervasive racial

inequality led to low morale among black veterans and the black population in the U.S. (Kersten 15). In 1939, the number of black soldiers was at a drastic low: 3,640 black soldiers and only five of them were officers. While these numbers changed quickly, President Roosevelt signed quotas into law, continuing segregation in the Armed Forces, and capping black soldier numbers at nine percent of the military population. The numbers never reached that height during WWII, and many black soldiers were not assigned overseas because of their perceived inferiority in soldier training.

Simultaneously, countries like Australia requested that the U.S. not post black soldiers, as it would, in their view, lead to problems with the local white population (Kersten 16). In September 1941, the Civilian Aide to the Secretary of War, William Hastie, conducted a survey of the use of black troops in the US military. His findings indicated a marked difference between publicly announced policies about black military personnel and practices. He found that blacks were "disproportionately concentrated in the Corps of Engineers, the Quartermaster Corps….most easily in detached units, rather than as an integral part of larger combat teams" (Lee 137). The segregation of units occurred in two ways: inside the military as separate black units, and in terms of location of training bases, as three-fourths of black trainees were placed in the South, where they were subjected to Jim Crow policies. The treatment of black soldiers in the military was, in Hastie's opinion, largely rooted in the fact that "traditional mores of the South have been widely accepted and adopted by the Army as the basis of policy and practice affecting the Negro soldier...in tactical organization, in physical location, in human contacts, the Negro soldier is separated from the white soldier as completely as possible" (Hastie as quoted in Lee, 137).

The no man's land of military membership marked the black soldier as part of a nation that subjected him to segregated forces and Jim Crow, counting him as cannon fodder while refusing to permit him equal standing to do the work of a white soldier. His body would mark him as 'other' and second class citizen, while he fought for American nationalism, the cause of freedom and liberty, internationally. Black activism dealt with this confused state of the black soldier in different ways. One popular method attacked the inferior training and positions provided to the black soldier. Charles Diggs, a state senator from Michigan, proclaimed in the pages of the Cleveland Gazette in 1940, " in the World War we not only suffered from the lack of training but for the most part new and poorly trained white officers were put in command of Negro troops", and "it is high time the Negro wakes up and tells America…that we are not going to be targets in a scientific conflict without knowing something about the science of war". The emphasis on knowledge as practical training in a discipline, "the science of war" on the battlefield, and the voicing in powerful rhetoric to "wake up", suggests that WWII was also seen as a battlefield for the rights and practices of the black American as both American citizen and soldier. In this vein, the black soldier, with adequate training and "science" behind him, would transform into a full citizen, embodying the American values of freedom and equality. He would not be in a no man's land- he was an American.

By 1942, this had transformed into the "Double V" campaign, both a fight for freedom abroad and the black citizen's freedom stateside.Underlying this kind of activism was a belief that the black citizen occupied equal space inside the military as a white one, and it understood WWII ideology of freedom and liberation as American domestic ideals, ones that can be realized for all citizens. This was supposedly supported

by wartime recruitment governmental laws.The newly drafted Selective Service Act of September 1940 pushed a fair and equitable recruitment of black soldiers, arguing in its preamble that "in a free society the obligations and privileges of military training and service should be shared...with a fair and just system of selective compulsory military training and service" (Lee 71), and contained two provisions that outlawed discrimination based on race or color in doing so. However, it also cautioned that recruitment of men was based on services available, "no men shall be inducted...until adequate provisions shall have been made for such shelter, sanitary facilities, water supplies...for such men, as may be determined by the Secretary of War...to be essential to public and personal health" (Lee 74).

The nature of civilian segregation repeated inside the military body allowed for loopholes inside the SSA to permit exclusions if segregational facilities could not be built or accommodated. The language of the Selective Service act, which defines when and how bodies can be recruited into the national body of citizenry, understood black men as military men only in murky times "essential to public and personal health"- theoretically part of the Same, they registered as second-class citizens until deemed necessary by the US military, a body of whiteness which had the privilege of defining the black body as soldier as it saw fit. The effect of military segregation was particularly detrimental in providing black soldiers positions commensurate with their abilities and training. In one example, the Second Corps area that operated in New York, New Jersey and Delaware, was authorized to ship 290 black men to the 24th Infantry, and 290 to the 25th in Fort Benning, Georgia. Due to lack of segregated facilities for the black soldiers at the 24th infantry, were all sent to the 25th infantry, who had no need of 290 of them. Black

soldiers were thus assigned to units, not based on occupational specialties, educational background, testing aptitudes or any other classification method, but by numbers alone (Lee 93).

Black press activism

Black press and activist groups recognized and pushed back against this inferior positioning for black soldiers. As such, their activism was twofold: first, to push the American government to use black soldiers actively, and recruit them accordingly. Second, they advocated for a complete change in military segregational policies (Lee 84). Their strategic double-faceted moves indicate that they reflexively understood that the position of the black soldier was a unique one: simultaneously, he was part of a nationalist system that rendered him second class citizen, while using his labor for national agendas. So, the change had to be both outside the military apparatus, and within the national agenda of military service. The black press was actively presenting it through both lenses. Metz Lochard, in a *The Cleveland Gazette* opinion piece, proclaimed, "The negro problem is a major problem of American democracy. If the black man is called upon to defend this democracy, he has a legitimate claim to those rights which are guaranteed by…the political government which he is urged to protect. If this be an incorrect view, the Negro has no reason…to be exercised about a war *fought by white folk, for the exclusive benefit and glorification of white folk*" (italics mine).Lochard's alternative version of America's participation in WWII as one "fought by….for the exclusive benefit...of white folk", correctly points out the paradox of American nationalism, one that depends on black bodies to reinforce its whiteness, one that fights

for freedom for “white folk”, while blind to its lack of representation for all Americans, including people of color.

This contradictory state of the black soldier was reflected even in media portrayals of the war. The Office of War Information (OWI), in their posters, comics and advertisements for the war effort, under pressure from southern Congressional representatives, refused to provide photographic evidence of blacks in military roles, while pushing black newspapers and editors to support the war effort for democracy. When blacks were presented in media portrayals of WWII, like the OWI- produced “The Negro Soldier”, it was to appeal to black audiences with a sanitized, problematic portrayal of the well-adjusted black soldier that served in WWII with equanimity (Phillips). When black soldiers entered military life, their blackness was recruited into the national project of whiteness in such contradictory ways that erased their bodily realities. These contradictory ways in which black soldiers counted as part of the militant body demonstrated how the whiteness of military system itself was internally contested, and hardly as monolithic as it desired. Simultaneously, it was registering an alternative agency of black soldiers.

The “Double V” campaign’s eventual failure to achieve equal rights for blacks is linked, in my view, to this reality of the ‘no man’s land’ of military life for the black soldier. WWII was a battle for whiteness, serviced by a military rooted in whiteness. Engaging with this in a symmetrical method did not provide black military men agency or equal footing to white soldiers, as they remained without the systemic hegemony of whiteness and its default norms. However, this was not the conclusion of the matter. Although the white national project would like to disappear black soldiers, it was the

asymmetrical actions and resistance of these black soldiers that reveal this "making" of whiteness, a project of whiteness that was actively trying to constitute itself, but required the paradoxical act of inclusion/exclusion of bodies of color in its effort.

Black Asymmetrical Authorship in John Henrik Clarke's letters

To examine how black citizens navigated American belonging, it is necessary to examine non-traditional and more private forms of authorship. How black writers pushed back against effacement can be seen outside of traditional literary works post-WWII, through authorship in the non-traditional genre of soldier letters. Soldier letters from previous wars have been studied in the context of historical documentation, objects of memory, alternative narratives, and wartime realities (Luckins; Risley; Brannock; Hutchinson) among others. Here, I look at soldier letters in the archive of Africana studies founder and black activist John Henrik Clarke, examining the role of black mentorship for veterans of WWII. I examine the role of authorship in formulating black cultural citizenship in meaningful ways, against a nationalist focus on whiteness as normative and liberatory.

From 1941 to 1945, John Henrik Clarke served in the US Army Air Forces, promoted to the rank of a non-commissioned officer before he left the service.
In America, the drafting of all male soldiers for war was undoubtedly a significant move that affected black Americans and their cultural identity. The U.S. military, and its subsequent veteran benefits such as the G.I. Bill, was often considered a necessary step for black social mobility, yet the military reinforced many of the inequalities of civilian life. The majority of black units in World War II served with Quartermasters or the Army Corps of Engineers, and often in menial positions. As Clarke explains, "no matter what

talent, education, or potential you had, if you were black, you ended up in the kitchen" (Swanston 103). It is no wonder that Clarke found his experiences during the draft stifling and tedious. He wanted to focus on his literary writing, but found no time or space to do so during boot camp, "I did little or no writing in Camp Upton. The barracks are so noisy…that no one could read or write in peace" (Schomburg Archive, "John H. Clarke Letters"). Soldier training was also scant, as he explains in his letter, "the colored boys are found mostly in the schools of truck driving, machinist, warehouse, salvage…. many who request schools other than those named…have been put on a dummy waiting list…I am listed to attend the machinist school. One subject that never interests me….when one protests against the school…he is usually sent to 'labor school'" (Schomburg Archive, "John Henrik Clarke Letters"). It is of interest that the military assigned black soldiers to specific schools set aside for men of color, and prevented others from resisting the categorization, with the discipline of 'labor school', or the pretense of dummy lists. In effect, it expected black soldiers to respect and acknowledge the authoritative nature of military hierarchy, assigning them to training as they deemed appropriate (on bodily realities of color), but resisted individual attempts to navigate training for their own individual interests or purposes. As such, it both erased black bodies while it disciplined the same- rendering the black man an invisible paradox inside the nationalistic machine of military life.

Despite this experience of racism within the ranks of the military, Clarke moved up the ranks quickly, promoted to sergeant within a year, "my communication and correspondence was so good, sometimes I was called up on the base and asked for my opinion about correspondence between commands. I was appointed Master Sergeant...I

was an administrative genius…and the worst soldier" (Swanston 109). Clarke's self-assessment clarifies how the military life was, in his view, a wasted opportunity for his talents. It also showcases the ideological struggle for the black soldier inside this 'no man's land'- an "administrative genius" was still the "worst soldier", unable to reconcile his two different bodily realities. Yet his talents for administration, and particularly for fostering positive relations between black and white soldiers, were not unnoticed. A request for retaining his services from his commanding officer notes, "Sgt. Clark is efficiently performing the duties of Sergeant Major…. he is exceptionally important at this time because of his stabilizing influence among the men and his sincere efforts in encouraging congenial relationships between White and Colored troops" (Schomburg Archive, "John Henrik Clarke Letters"). The conflicting nature of his military service was that Clarke was seen as valuable for his intellectual traits, while relegated to the ranks of the menial workers and segregated based on his color. These intellectual abilities were conscripted in military life to reinforce the status quo of segregation de jure, and its processes. His intellectual work was harnessed for "fostering positive relations between black and white soldiers", or maintaining the system of inequalities in place within the military, while he continued to be unrewarded in terms of rank or position for that invisible labor.

Finding his training experiences unremarkable, Clarke focused on his writing and social activism whenever possible. This deliberate move of intellectual authorship provides a competing representation of what a black soldier, in Headley's words, "an asymmetrical consciousness", was. Clarke does this by often changing the topic in his personal letters to his continued interest in black issues and his literary ambitions, "how

did you like my story in the "Crisis"?" He sent off a few poems and writings for publication, but also received rejections for material that did not fit the prescribed military veteran mold. One rejection letter simply reads, in handwriting, "Sorry, this did not do it for me", while another explains, "we want fiction which deals with problems brought on by the war…certainly you are in the position to write this sort of thing, being in the front line, so to speak" (Schomburg Archive, "John Henrik Clarke papers"). Clarke's reluctance to use war material in his writings on black studies was, ironically, pointed out here- military topics were in vogue, and specifically, "problems brought on by the war". Clarke distanced himself from this type of writing, often seeing Africana studies and the military life as distinctly different, and one even conflicting with the relevance of the other. This silence also speaks volumes about how black soldiers saw themselves inside the largely white military.

How these "problems brought on by the war" were defined depended on the racial identity of the soldier. Black civil rights issues remained largely unchanged in civilian society during and after WWII, despite activism by black newspapers and media to see black military service in WWII as heroic demonstrations of black citizenship, and a precursor to the necessity of equal rights for both white and black citizens in America. The precise nature of "problems brought on by the war" appeals to the trauma of warfare, and the American work for freedom from Nazism. This was a national imperative built on the body of whiteness inside the military, a military that still actively practiced internal discrimination and segregation while it publicly attested to equality and justice for black soldiers.It is curious that Clarke's military recruitment was seen as a privileged position for authorship, as his pen only produced silence about the "problems of war" and

military life. I argue that this was a strategic silence, as his letters and correspondence to other black soldiers restructures a different form of soldier, one unregistered within the body of whiteness in the military. He was a black body, but one whose material experiences were invisible inside no man's land.

Rhetorical silence in asymmetrical authorship

In her work on black veterans and their writing, Jennifer James contends that many black wartime writers were more invested in the political question of black rights than global democracy and used the war as a political instrument in the movement. In doing so, black artists presented the image of a stoic and heroic black soldier, one untouched by the experience of warfare. James argues that until Gwendolyn Brooks' *A Street in Bronzeville*, a poetry collection that dealt with black realities during and after WWII, many black wartime writers shied away from descriptions of physical and psychic wounds that presents the black man as disabled, which would further distance him from the representative body of white and healthy Americans. This "omission" and "minimization" is damage control, the "literary equivalent" of physical rehabilitation (James 233). In effect, black literary works presented, through the strategic silence about the traumas of warfare on black soldiers, a black soldier that was materially equivalent to a white one: whole, and recognized. It is telling that while the black masculinist novelists presented this view of black masculinity, Brooks' rendition presented injury as protest, the domestic details and a full representation of the black man inside and outside the military body of whiteness, extending his experiences of inequality to the experience of black women and the civilian sphere.

The black masculinist form of silence, however, differs from Clarke's public written silence about his wartime experiences. He did not suffer any physical injury during his service, neither was he actively censoring his traumatic experiences. It is my argument that his silence can be seen as more of what I am calling an "asymmetrical" form of authoring. His private correspondence with black soldiers builds the case for his national wartime participation as providing the building blocks for his activism. It is more precise to say that his silence about his military life, in the published genres of poetry and oratory, is an intentional and strategic withholding. Roger Thompson, in his analysis of student veterans in the composition classroom, argues that veteran silence is an agentive rhetorical act, and can be "a legitimate, complex, and powerful response to war", an attempt to circumvent civilian society's inability to provide a space that acknowledges these deeply personal realities (201). Cheryl Glenn similarly argues that, "silence can deploy power"(155) as essential as speech, and is not diametrically opposed to language. I argue that Clarke's experiences as a black soldier in no man's land did not register inside accepted public genres of literature or nonfiction, and so he withheld much of his experience or dismissed it as inconsequential. When he discusses his wartime experiences in his memoirs, Clarke often focused on camaraderie with other black soldiers, and societal inequalities that mirrored Jim Crow laws in civilian society. In other words, his public and published writing included wartime stories that were careful cullings that reflected the popular renderings of black soldier recollections, and left out many details that his soldier letters explain. While public black literary work in the 1940s focused on social and political realities, and military work focused on nationalistic agendas, Clarke found an asymmetrical authorship inside soldier letters and other non-traditional genres

instead, where the hazy identity formation in 'no man's land' had a space for conversation.

In these soldier letters, Clarke and his fellow black soldiers also practice their own form of rhetorical silence, a careful evasion or elision over traumatic and painful memories connected to war experiences. Here, the rhetorical silence is not merely a withholding, but rather an agentive move that leaves unspoken the commonalities of experience. This is done both because of the common nature of these experiences, which do not require redundant detailings in epistolary writing among fellow black soldiers, and due to the conflicting position of the black soldier inside the national apparatus of the military. Recruitment into the militant body presupposes an allegiance to matters of the whole national body, and places little value on individual concerns. Soldier letters addressed to other soldiers reinforce this paradigm, and so the soldier-writers evade details on individual concerns of health, societal tensions and social relationships but are clearer on matters pertaining to military work and life. The act of writing and communicating with other black soldiers through letter writing is particularly significant because it is nonetheless an act of cultural citizenship that promotes a private community building, outside the glare of public portrayals of black activism and national war efforts.

Clarke and the foundations of Africana Studies

Clarke served in the military with an understanding of its replication of the black man's place in American society as empty figures, rendered without a history or identity. Such an experiential reality found its place in Clarke's subsequent research and practice as an Africana studies scholar. Clarke was born into an era that saw two diametrically opposed thoughts about Africana history and identity. One movement of black liberation,

labeled integrationism, pushed for the treatment of Africans as equals in America through the work of assimilation. Much like other ethnic groups in America, the "African-American" would consider American blackness, and the African-American identity, as distinct from an African identity, in effect disavowing identification with Africa and its history. Another political movement, one more aligned with Clarke's subsequent career, saw blackness as a distinct African identity. In such a view, the African never obtained full citizenship or American identity, forever rendered second class citizens through slavery and its effects. This movement, called Pan-African nationalism, advocated for an excavation of Africana study that traced African identity and history as distinct from the American one, and as the rightful history of the person of African descent. Africana Studies defined nationalism as a connection to Africa, rendering nation-state concepts such as citizenship superfluous. Clarke's own scholarship takes such a position, focusing on black internalism and history as foundational realities of Africana studies.[4] In his subsequent written essays on Africana history, published in the 1990s, Clarke actively pushed back against the erasure of black culture, arguing that "to understand fully any aspect of Afro-American life, one must realize that the Black American is not without a cultural past, though he was many generations removed from it before his achievements in American literature and art commanded any appreciable attention"(144).[5] Much of his scholarly excavation of Africana history worked to fill in this gap, giving flesh to the rich cultural and historical realities of people of African descent.

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[4] See essays by Toure, Conyers Jr, Patterson etc in *Pan African Nationalism in the Americas: the life and times of John Henrik Clarke.* John Conyers.& Julius E. Thompson, Eds. Trenton: Africa World Press, 2004.

[5] Clarke, John Henrik. "African-American historians and the reclaiming of African history."in *Pan African Nationalism in the Americas: the life and times of John Henrik Clarke.* John Conyers.& Julius E. Thompson, Eds. Trenton: Africa World Press, 2004.

However, it is my argument that a purely American national experience, the experience of military life and its no man's land of black citizenship, provided the building blocks for Clarke's eventual advocacy along such lines. Although scholarship on Clarke has largely focused on his post-military historical essays and oratories, I argue that his military career and his soldier letter writing need to be examined as important building blocks to his eventual work in Africana Studies, as "missing pages" of his work's foundation in American national endeavors. In the face of blatantly segregational and racist practices inside the nationalist military body of whiteness, Clarke's soldier letter writing was building the case of why the African identity needed study and consideration as an asymmetrical reckoning with whiteness. His asymmetrical authorship through soldier letters indicates an eroding of the nation-state as the appropriate vehicle for black American identity. Ironically, he did so as a member of the national body, a soldier rendered second-class citizen in the US military. As such, it is is clear that his military time and experience is connected to his subsequent work, although it was philosophically diametrically in opposition to it.

Clarke's Wartime Literary Study

This contradictory investment in black culture while within military confines is echoed in Clarke's archives of literary study, while he was still in the military. It could explain why, in terms of serving the protest and African-American movement, Clarke was examining and studying literary scholarship that had roots in military service. His presence in no man's land, and his continued writing within it, was creating a new frame for African identity, and his literary study soldier letters show his early thinking along those lines. In his wartime writings, there is a document of study and listing of black

literature and writers, written on paper with a military address as letterhead. It is likely a self-study document written during his time on the military base. He starts with, "'to be a Negro in a time like this" was one of the best poems of protest since Francis E. Harper wrote 'Bury me in a free land'". He is referring to the James Carrothers' poem, "At the Closed Gate of Justice" which has the lines:

> To be a Negro in a day like this
> Demands strange loyalty. We serve a flag
> Which is to us white freedom's emphasis.
> Ah! One must love when Truth and Justice lag,
> To be a Negro in a day like this.

These lines from the poem, as a header for his list of African American writers, makes it clear that in Clarke's mind, the ideas of patriotism, freedom and warfare in writing were contextually tied to issues of black civil rights and activism, as "poems of protest". Carrothers' references to the "flag" and "strange loyalty", and its "white freedom's emphasis", clarifies how the black American grappled with his identity inside a national body of whiteness. Significantly, it connects to Clarke's own experience, writing inside this no man's land for black soldiers. Clarke's focus on these black poets' nuanced views of their identities within whiteness paralleled his own concerns, serving within a segregated military, recruited into a "militant body", vowing a "strange loyalty" to a country that did not register his national identity. It no doubt heightened his own views on the matter: the black man could not find a place inside this body of whiteness in a manner that recognized his material reality.

His focus on the black man's plight inside the body of nationalism is also illustrated in his other literary selections. Clarke's lists includes poets like James Weldon Johnson, "his poems depicting the negro's desires for a great place in American life".

Johnson's most famous poem was "Lift every voice and sing", alternatively known as "The Negro National Anthem". This poem contains hopeful and resilient imagery evoking black experiences. It presses for blacks to "lift every voice and sing/till earth and heaven sing/ring with the harmonies of Liberty", and ends with a call to loyalty, "may we forever stand,/true to our God/true to our native land". The doubled call to allegiance to both god and country celebrates the black American's triumph over adversity as sheer willpower and faith, rather than signs of national progress. Yet for Johnson, the black citizen's song of liberty and allegiance to "our native land" comes from a hopeful evocation that liberty was imminent, "have not our weary feet/come to the place for which our fathers sighed?" Clarke's analysis of Johnson's work, however, focused not on his hopes for imminent social equality, but rather on the black American's "desires for a great place in American life". In Clarke's military experience, the no man's land was a space where such hope had not met its realization yet. He admired Johnson's work for its evocation of 'the negro's desires", which wouldn't just depend on evocations of justice, but a black-centered work, asymmetrical to the work of the nation. Clarke's focus on the "place" of the black man, indicates that he saw social rights on the battlefield and in private life, as parallels of each other. The no man's land of military service only made this painfully clear, not necessarily closer and within reach. Clarke's words also echo Richard Wright's vision of the place of the black man and his "stunted place in life". This was a no man's land that, while absorbing the black identity into the national myth, nonetheless provided the catalyst for asymmetrical consciousness revealed through writing.

Clarke's study of black literature during his military service also addresses the Harlem Renaissance, a period of black writing and literary output that focused on social reality and protest against the black American's place in life. Clarke's focus here is not only on black literary work, but rather on its conflicting connections, or lack thereof, to national identity. His place in the military had provided the impetus to analyze how black subjectivity, particularly inside nationalist agendas, can change the dynamic of protest. In his list for "the Rise of the Negro Renaissance", Clarke writes, "this period gave rise to the best and the worst writing the Negro has yet done in America", but noting ironically that one of the "best poets to come out of this era…Claude McKay a British subject"… 'If we Must Die' [has] done, more to stir American Negro[e]s to resent oppression than any other". Claude McKay was a Jamaican national who wrote poetry, short stories and novels that celebrated black life and its realities both in Jamaica and in America. His most famous poem, "If we Must Die", advocated for unity among all blacks, and a militarist resistance against social injustice, "what though before us lies the open grave?/like men we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack,/pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back!"

Clarke's analysis reframes this poem, and McKay's role in the rise of Harlem Renaissance writing as one that evacuated increasingly porous lines of national identity: McKay, despite being British, was connecting to American national themes of belonging. Here are some of the beginnings of Clarke's focus on African pan-nationalism outside of the nation-state, prompted by literary study in the no man's land of military life. Yet, Clarke's own experience was tied to a national military context, writing on an Air Force base in Kelly Field, Texas. This poem brings up questions for Clarke's own position as a

national agent, and his seemingly conflicting interest in black internationalism. However ironically, Clarke's military life was the appropriate space for this writing and thinking, and for his study of black activism *as* writing. The no man's land of military work became a productive space for reframing black identity outside purely national terms, as it was a space that did not register black writing and authorship except as second-class subjectivity. It marked his connection to this poem, McKay's position in a Negro Renaissance, and the poet/writer's conflicting connection to national identity, what a black military man would understand all too well.

Clarke's own literary authorship during his time in the service also demonstrates how military service and soldier writing were building blocks to his eventual activism for Africana studies as a discipline. A poem Clarke submitted called "Sing me a new song", is present in his folder of wartime correspondence. Although published in 1948, in his first book of poetry *Rebellion in Rhyme*, it was written during Clarke's time in the U.S. military. In his introduction to this book of poems, he writes, " except for two poems, Sing Me a New Song and Meditations of a European Farmer, all of these poems were written before I was inducted into the army in 1941, where I spent four years, two months, and 26 days" (Clarke, Introduction to *Rebellion in Rhyme*). His curiously specific numbering of his army days is only matched by the specifically militaristic bent of these two poems written during his military service. In fact, it is clear that these poems reflect his military experience and its influence on his eventual move into, "where [he] is now as a Teacher, Intellect and a committed African Freedom Fighter"(Clarke, Introduction to *Rebellion in Rhyme*).

"Sing me" is the longest poem in this collection. It is, as his other works, a call to protest: "sing me a song with some hunger in it, and a challenge too/let the hunger be the kind of hunger/Turner and Denmark Vesey had…let the challenge be the kind of challenge/Crispus Attucks had". Critics see such historical references as a throwback to the more explicit militaristic protest writing of the Harlem Renaissance. By the 1940s, such writing had lost its appeal, and black poetry was muted in its address of martial protest.[6] I argue that Clarke's evocation of militaristic protest is more indicative of his own service in the military, and its ties to his later activist career. His mention in the poem of American revolutionaries, particularly men of color who revolted for freedom, equates soldier work, and the international agenda of militarism, with the fight for freedom stateside. It ends with a note of defiance, a call to action: "sing me a song of people hungry for freedom/who will study the war until they are free!"This is written explicitly as a poem of wartime agency for soldiers of color. It shies away from imagery of the bodily horrors of war injury or trauma, and focuses instead on civil rights. Most importantly, it calls for black citizens to "study" history, advocating for the act of writing itself as protest. Clarke presents a hypermasculine, yet romantic anthem, avoiding any mentions of vulnerability or explicit bodily suffering of war, prioritizing the work of warfare in inspiring stateside protest.

This kind of writing can be differentiated from his more Africana-centered work of his later years, not only in its use of poetry as a genre, but in its asymmetrical authorial moves. Like other stories and poems, Clarke had submitted this poem for publication during his military career, and received a rejection. It is my contention that Clarke's

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[6] Patterson, Raymond R. "John Henrik Clarke's Rebellion in Rhyme". In *Pan African Nationalism in the Americas: the life and times of John Henrik Clarke.* James Conyer & Julius E. Thompson, Eds. Trenton: Africa World Press, 2004.

poem did not fit editorial desires for publication because it rendered black military service, not as another version of the "Greatest Generation" of white soldiers, but a uniquely specific experience that tied to black history of protest and revolution. His rejection is also evidence, in my view, that Clarke's poem defied categorization because the black soldier's writings, rooted in experiential realities, could not register in the national consciousness. As such, it is an example of his asymmetrical authorship: a productive engagement in writing about black experience from a black military man, but one that did not have a public audience.

I understand Clarke's silence here on the theme of international liberation of WWII ideology and his silence on bodily trauma in war as strategic moves of asymmetrical authorship. I am arguing that he deflects from common war themes and imagery, focusing instead on black historical reality in America and its connection to national enterprise of war. He positions the black bodily identity as quintessentially and historically American, specifically through its participation in the nationalistic enterprise of military service. His black figure is one of protest, but a stateside one, rooted in history that needs to be excavated. Having served in the military body, this black soldier, in the tradition of black soldiers in American history, has a song of "hunger"- one for recognition inside no man's land. This document also demonstrates that very early in his career, Clarke already viewed and positioned himself as a black intellectual focused on social progress, which conflicted with the black military experience: a place where blacks were rendered afterthoughts and signifiers of the status quo of Jim Crow.

Clarke's ambivalence about military service in WWII

Before Clarke entered the service, he was living and working in Harlem as co-owner of a restaurant. Simultaneously, he was writing historical plays about Africa, and worked as an actor with Willis N. Huggins, a historian and social activist. For each of his

roles of black historical figures, he did extensive research, thus beginning his forays into Africana history. As such, his interests and understanding of blackness was deeply rooted in African and Pan-African historical connections. He admitted that WWII, "had presented a special problem to me. I knew the war wasn't about African people and I had some serious questions about my participation in this war" (Swanston 110). In effect, he saw the war effort as a white and European problem. On his return, and in his recollections of the wartime years, Clarke dismisses much of his military service as a "distraction" which "added nothing to my African awareness" (Swanston 111). When he came out of the military, he returned back to school and intellectual pursuits of literary writing, and also started attending political meetings. Although there was a lot of anti-communist sentiment at the time, even among other Africanists, Clarke portrays himself as "an independent Socialist...an African nationalist", and emphasized that he had "never really been a Communist" (Swanston 112).

However, his private correspondence during his military service paints a more nuanced picture of Clarke's early forays into activism and mentorship, even though Clarke himself did not see it that way. In his first week of army training he writes home, "this life I am embracing against my will is slowly altering many of my treasured traits". This early letter home shows that, despite Clarke's later dismissal of his army career as irrelevant, the military life had drastic effects on a black soldier in a system of whiteness. The first marker of a soldier of color inside the military is one of alienation, and disturbed recognition of the no man's land he inhabits. Clarke continues to describe a difficult transition into the military in other letters, " needless to say I do not like the army life…I have done very little writing since becoming a soldier", which maintains his aloofness

about the value of military experience. Curiously, his own recollection in his memoirs contradicts this "little writing", as he mentions in his memoirs that while he served in Camp Lee, Virginia, he continued to write his column for the *Pittsburgh Courier*, submit short stories to *Crisis* magazine and other literary magazines. I see this curious dismissal of his military-time writing as part of the effects of the environment of a no man's land, that does not recognize soldiers of color and their work in meaningful ways. Clarke would only identity himself and his writing as a historian and activist in civilian life, despite his military-era writing showing the contrary, because his nationalist position as military personnel muddied his bodily realities and allegiances to black culture and history.

Of course, the military's relegation of Clarke and other black soldiers to menial tasks meant that Clarke saw his military work and training as essentially stumbling blocks to the future he envisioned for himself. The military as a body of whiteness, in its enactment of Jim Crow regulations inside the army did exactly that- recruited black men into the nationalist agenda, but decline to allow them full participation as citizens. Writing on the other hand, particularly in the private sphere of letter writing, provided more democratic access to expressing his experiential reality, in his own words. It also presented a space to negotiate the work of no man's land, and present his reality within his own framework of blackness. Clarke's prioritizing of the work of writing over the labor of soldier work is also important, as it highlights the role of invisible labor, or his work in previously unrecognized genres of writing, in creating a particular consciousness of blackness within the whiteness of the military.

Letter Writing as Record Keeping

Despite his distaste for military life, Clarke does demonstrate his military bonds in other ways, particularly in his attention to black G.I. experience. Often, Clarke used letter writing as a way to record black experiences that countered the military's system of default whiteness. Although the military recruited both black and white men through their draft, the system did not protect soldiers from their experiential realities. When they traveled down south for training, Clarke reports an incident of racism outside the camp between soldiers, "some of the boys went into town Saturday and on their way back the bus was crowded.One of the colored boy[s] had to stand by a seat occupied by one of the white soldiers, he objected and said, "nigger get to the back where you belong"....the white soldier..openly admitted he was from Mississippi". Such incidents make clear that racism from civilian society replicated itself inside the military apparatus, and black soldiers, despite their recruitment into a body of whiteness, were continually reminded of their place as second class citizens. However, these incidents are remarkable for being examples of the anxieties of a system of whiteness that depends on soldiers of color for its work. Such racist incidents demonstrate these anxieties through individuals, in racist and prejudiced language and actions.

Clarke's work in writing down such narratives, and representing their realities in private communication, is an example of asymmetrical authorship as record keeping in letters. Much as he excavated African history in later years to redraw the lines of history that were neglected, here Clarke records such incidents to acknowledge the work of the black soldier, and push back against attempts at erasing his experience. Clarke highlights such incidents of racism between the enlisted in an early move toward advocacy, "the

boys around camp are talking about the incident…I think something newsworthy will come out of this affair. I will watch it and let you know". The letter makes two moves: as advocate, Clarke is positioning himself as the storyteller, but only in letter writing. His involvement with the "boys around camp" also gestures at his own role as leader and advocate, the invisible and unregistered labor which found its place even inside the military that diminished both his role and work. These asymmetric strategies of writing as community building are also significant as early parts of a written archive of hitherto unacknowledged practices of black cultural citizenship during Jim Crow.

In Clarke's own later political thinking, blackness was not only a matter of identity, but one of political ideology. There, he argued, "Blacks have always been involved in contradiction. They have not fully realized that the political ideologies, right or left, will not save them either, unless they control it...it is an unresolved situation that runs through the entire political history of Black people in the United States" (Conyer and Thompson 92). In the space of no man's land, Clarke's letters indicate this form of self-advocacy, and a political realization of the necessity of agency in this place of contradiction.

Soldier letter writing as mentorship

Clarke's clear camaraderie with his fellow black soldiers, and his concern about their affairs, is further demonstrated in the letters sent between Clarke and military veterans, ranging in topics from military experience, familial and alcohol abuse, to employment difficulties for blacks in transitioning to civilian life. Letters to Clarke from and about three black American soldiers:Sergeant Masood Ali Warren, Private Alexander Sutton and Private Walter L. Tompkins, indicate the strength of Clarke's mentorship and

their subsequent connections through prevalent struggles of black veterans. I argue that the soldiers' epistolary writing, a form of asymmetrical authorship, gives experiential grounding to Clarke's work building Africana Studies as a discipline, already in the works during WWII. I argue that letters sent to Clarke are examples of an alternate repository of authorship that has not been previously considered as cultural practices of citizenship.The communal experiences of racism and segregation as a black man in military life, particularly during a war that celebrated America as liberatory savior, reinforced the difficulties of being part of the system of whiteness while simultaneously always outside its privileges. The soldier communications through letters established a community in no man's land. In doing so, it lent further evidence to the necessity of Africana studies and its investment in African history as the black citizen's true identity, an asymmetrical consciousness that was a necessity after the American military's erasure of black soldiers during WWII.

Alexander Sutton is one of the few veterans mentioned in Clarke's memoirs. He is presented as, "the older brother of Percy Sutton, who later headed the Apollo Theater… my service record chief" (Swanston 109). Clarke portrays him as an intelligent and educated individual. He had gone to Tuskegee Institute, a military training facility for black airmen and soldiers, "The Suttons had a farm…on which he had installed an electrical system. He had bought the equipment, put it up, and he even put a pond on the farm to supply water. Tuskegee trained men well" (Swanston 109). He had four years of college but Sutton was a private, the beginner rank in the military. Although Clarke was pleased with Sutton's ability during his time in service, Sutton's letter indicates other complications and realities. His letter to Clarke has a header over the address that says in

his writing, “keep this address secret I don’t want my mother and father to know where I am”. This direction is a concrete example of asking for and performing silence through writing. In the genre of letter writing, which requires an address line to continue this communication, it is clear that Sutton was only open to Clarke’s receipt of his writing, and specifically limited this private realm of letter writing to another black soldier, a mentor. This makes it clear that the space of no man’s land was a shared space between black soldiers, and a productive space for private authorship. Opening it up to others, even his own family wasn’t part of Sutton’s plan- for reasons left omitted. However, this silence does communicate to Clarke, another black soldier, that wartime experience and the bodily reality of a black man inside the whiteness of the military was a difficult one that was not always possible to articulate. This strategic silence, seen before in Clarke’s own authorship, is the linking chain in no man’s land for issues shared by the black soldiers inside the military.

Such issues can be viable concerns of his status within this military, an ambivalent state for a black man who is often an unwilling recruit into the national agenda of whiteness. The body of his letter indicates some medical issues that leave his military status as dubious, “I am in the hospital for my tonsils to be taken out and an examination of my right shoulder. They have discussed sending me back pending the tonsillitis examination…no telling what is going to happen. All I can do is wait and see”. He signs off, “your pal, Alexander Sutton” (Schomburg Archive, “John Henrik Clarke papers”). In another letter, his request and tone is more desperate, asking for Clarke’s intervention based on his higher rank and friendship, “ Say Clark I am to be shipped back down there in a couple of days or week…if there is any way possible to give me a break.

I think you are not one of those kind of shit[t]y individuals that had me shipped out because I had too much Education. I am a good soldier and a general Clerk…hoping to hear from you soon and knowing you will do everything you can to help me get situated" (Schomburg Archive, "John Henrik Clarke papers"). His ease of address ("Say Clark") and his dispensing of formalities in his introductory sentences clarifies the friendly nature of this letter, and its value to the author as urgent communication. It was understood that rank is preserved between members of the military, and a formal tone would remain even in private letters. Sutton's personable address, and his quick shift into the topic of his precarious state inside the military apparatus, makes his urgent situation apparent, through the change in the expected tone of a letter between soldiers. However, it isn't a decision made only on the basis of urgency, but one I read as an authorial stratagem. The strategic casualness of address is another example of asymmetrical authorship, which dispenses with military regulations and formalities in favor of an engagement with black social realities for soldiers.

Sutton's fear of being "shipped out", taken away from his team because of his education, signals what happened to educated black men inside a military that could find no place for them. The Armed Forces, in an attempt at discouraging blacks from service[7], used the Army General Classification Test (AGCT) to reinforce segregation in the Armed Forces, based on literacy standards. Although many white men also scored low on this exam, they were still placed in combat units.The majority of blacks who participated in military service scored lower on this exam, and they were placed in segregated service

[7] Secretary of War Henry Louis Stimson's private journal entries admit that "the Army had adopted rigid requirements for literacy mainly to keep down the number of colored troops". Qtd in McGuire, Philip. *Taps for a Jim Crow Army. Letters from Black Soldiers in World War II.* Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio,1983.

squadrons rather than active combat units. However, there were many black soldiers, like Sutton, who were educated but were still grouped with the menial labor troops (McGuire 60). In a more equitable system, college educated black men would make strong noncommissioned officers, apt leaders for the other black men in their group. In effect, the military of institutional whiteness would not find a place where their talents and abilities could be used accordingly, leaving them in a no man's land, now with a vacuum of black mentorship.Sutton's trust in Clarke to advocate for him, possibly to place him in a position that would use his talents and abilities wisely, indicates that this no man's land provided a calling for men like Clarke to take up the invisible labor of mentorship. The avenue of letter writing, as an act of cultural citizenship, makes this invisible labor of mentorship visible, a situation that remains unearthed while such letters remain in the private domain of the author or recipient. However, Clarke's eventual work in building Africana studies adds another dimension to this work inside soldier letter writing: the work of advocacy and its networks inside writing.

Similarly, despite the literacy requirement that disciplined black bodies and prevented their entry into social mobility through military work, Sutton has pushed back through writing to ask for Clarke's advocacy. Here, the asymmetrical authorship does the work that military leadership and regulations would not do, by asking for a black mentor and leader. Sutton's shift into this call for action indicates that Clarke was not merely another soldier with shared experiences, but one whose advice and expertise navigating the no man's land of military life was an asset to other soldiers of color.

Sutton's rank and his medical status indicate that he was not in a stable position in the military, as appropriate to his intelligence or health. His refusal to let his family

know, but his reveal in his correspondence with Clarke, indicates the bond he has formed with his military colleague to trust him with his status over his own family. This evokes a particular "band of brothers" inside the military based not only on their military employment but their status as black citizens inside a racially charged white military. While in the service, he appeals to Clarke's power and competence to keep him stateside, and suspects that his move overseas is retaliation over his educational and occupational competence. He puts a great deal of trust in Clarke to see that he is "a good soldier", "knowing [he] will do everything…to help". The move from military to possible civilian life is also a difficult transition, as he is left in a state of limbo about his future.The private nature of such writing uses omission and silence to transmit the incommunicable nature of injury, military service and status, and the necessary assurance of black military mentorship to navigate such complicated terrain. The genre of letters evokes facts and appeals that speak to the trials of black soldiers, and the necessity of black mentorship inside the whiteness of the military. Clarke's correspondence is from soldier to soldier, a preservation of narrative and rank, itself the experiential reality of the black American soldier.

Another of Clarke's mentees, Private Walter L. Tompkins, had a civilian background in shipping and receiving, and his education had concluded with grammar school. He too turns to letter writing to his mentor, producing documents that hint at how letter writing, particularly for a soldier restricted based on literacy requirements, was still building his identity and concerns within the black community of soldiers. As with Sutton's letter, Tompkins dispenses with formalities of address.I read this move, in a

letter from a black private to his sergeant, as adding subversive elements to authorship, positioning this as an authorial move of resisting the regulations of military life.

Tompkins' letter to Clarke comes after his service, and addresses specific veteran concerns for black soldiers, without any of the language of international liberation and freedom associated with WWII soldiers and their work. His introduction, however, does show his own newfound freedom in private life, "I write you this letter, with nothing else on my mind, and plenty of time to do it in" (Schomburg Archive, "John Henrik Clarke papers"). The luxury of time and ease of purpose illustrated in his subjective wording reveals how restrictive military life was, by contrast, for uneasy recruits who found themselves in a system that took their labor, limited their possibilities, with no suggestion of reward.

Private communication, through letter writing, provides an opportunity to focus on individual concerns in a setting, between one soldier to the next, that invites openness. Tompkins' informal "Dear Clarke", indicates that he has acclimated to the relaxing of code with civilian life, as he doesn't refer to him by his title of Sergeant. However, I also read it as a move that demonstrates his relinquishing of military regulations, particularly in transitioning to civilian life. This is particularly important in considering the poor treatment of black veterans post WWII service. Tompkins seems to have health issues in civilian life, as he confesses, "I fin[d] it very hard trying to get some of those white pill, but I will go back to the hospital, next week, and I think I will be able to get some" (Schomburg Archive, "John Henrik Clarke papers"). Again, there is a deliberate omission or eliding over of difficult topics like injury and suffering. Tompkins' ease in confessing his dependence on the medication to Clarke, and the difficulty in obtaining necessary

health care, indicates his bond with him, but also sheds light on the common plight of black veterans. His previous dismissal of military titles might also show that despite his desire to leave military service behind, it is a whiteness that haunts his civilian life in health and employment.

His letter is an effort to push back against that whiteness by labelling it as society's failures rather than individual failings. He addresses his economic hardships with some bewilderment, "things here is kindly slow, and job is mostly fo[r] white, and I find[s] it very hard trying to get a good job in a defen[s]e factory. How are[is] thing[s] out for a person like me?" (Schomburg Archive, "John Henrik Clarke papers"). Job discrimination wasn't a novel phenomenon in post WWII civilian life for black veterans. At local VA centers, southern black veterans encountered racial discrimination, and found themselves denied jobs they qualified for, and placed in jobs for menial labor regardless of their rank and training (Onkst 519). In effect, it duplicated their experiences within the military itself. Here Tompkins addresses the contradictory nature of the inequalities he finds in civilian life, and pushes back against what they represent in writing, "how is thing out for a person like me?" Despite his military service, or the public perception of the generation of heroes, Tompkins, and many other soldiers of color from WWII, was dealing not only with a circumstance of empty economic possibilities that did not reflect the public representation of America as liberatory savior, but trying to grasp this reality without the value and validation of group membership through military service. His question to Clarke positions his civilian reality against his military status, as he calls himself, "a person like me", which I read as a nod to his status as a veteran of WWII. It explains his disenchantment with military protocol, evidenced by his ignoring

of rank and title, and places his letter as an example of asymmetrical authorship that redraws the lines of what national and social identity are for black soldiers and veterans.

While the general public was aware of the multiple benefits available to veterans such as the G.I. Bill, veteran guaranteed home loans and unemployment money, only other black soldiers and veterans would understand the difficulties in navigating the system in a racist Jim Crow culture. Although the G.I. Bill was in effect, veterans' organizations such as American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars did not allow black membership in many states. On their return to civilian life, many black veterans were harassed, beaten, and even murdered by white civilians and police (Jefferson 226). These hostile moves indicated that the system of whiteness in the military, which presupposed a default whiteness, would not safeguard soldiers of color despite their military status. As such, it provided glaring proof of the instability of the nationalist system of whiteness, which depends on bodies of color to do its work. In such a hostile and violent environment, returning black soldiers had to find solace and support in each other, as Tompkins does here in reaching out to Clarke. Tompkins' correspondence and confidence in Clarke's mentorship is an indispensable and therapeutic avenue of validating the reality of black veteran life in America. More importantly, even without Clarke's recorded response, this soldier letter itself can be seen as asymmetrical authorship, as it validates the necessity of Clarke's mentorship as invisible labor, despite a military of whiteness. Significantly, although military service and its rewards did not produce realities of success for black veterans, the bond of military service stretched Clarke's mentorship into civilian life through genres of asymmetrical authorship, validating black experience and marking their cultural practices of citizenship.

Clarke does a similar work of validating black experience for Sergeant Masood Ali Warren, an artist who had earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts in mural painting from New York University in 1939 before he joined the Quartermasters Corps in the U.S. Army. Unlike other soldiers who communicated with Clarke, Warren's education provided him a rank of noncommissioned officer, so his letter to Clarke takes on the familiarity of colleagues of similar rank, not as an asymmetrical move.

Instead, the asymmetrical authorial move here uses the no man's land as a space to commiserate about black experiences inside the system of whiteness. His letter to Clarke on April 16, 1942, begins with a reference to a female acquaintance who provided him Clarke's address, "credit must be given to Gumbs for sending me your address in her long letter to me this week", but proceeds to record, in the same section, a more serious topic, " you perhaps by now [are] informed of her attack by a sex-mad paleface. You can imagine how I feel about it" (Schomburg Archive, "John Henrik Clarke papers"). Warren's confessional, a muted but angry reaction to a sexual attack on his companion, is only detailed here to Clarke, indicating either the intimacy of their friendship, or the commonality of silence in the face of such experiences of injustice and racial attacks on blacks in America. This silence is particularly distinct for military personnel of color, who have to reconcile their position inside their national role as liberatory with the subjective reality that is decidedly restricted and servile. In this scenario, Warren's military position on base also meant that he was not physically in the position to act, if he had the opportunity to do so. As the attack is detailed in a letter while he was still in service, Warren is not in the position to address it in any other form than writing.

However, I would argue that his willingness to refer to this incident in his letter to Clarke is, in effect, an act of engaging with whiteness in an asymmetrical act of authorship. Against the normalizing work of the default whiteness of the military, Warren acknowledges his own blackness, and Clarke's, in writing down this narrative of assault. Such a story pushes back against a whiteness that recruits people of color without registering their work and reality in meaningful ways. It also pushes back against his lack of agency in this matter. Warren's only recourse is to push back in this private sphere of letter writing to another black soldier. His letter does not engage explicitly with the details of unjust actions through writing. The rendering of such occurrence of acts of violence against people of color, however, contradict and destabilize the ideological recruitment for black soldiers' membership in an Armed Forces that proclaims an ethos of liberation. Warren's selective detail, focused on his connection to the woman and his feelings on the matter, nonetheless communicates his anger and need for a receptive audience, but only in the space of private letter writing to another black man, one of same rank, in the military. Their similar positions mean that they would both understand how the no man's land erases their experiential realities in pronounced ways, while the reality of the experience of segregation proved otherwise. Warren says as much when he tells Clarke, "you can imagine how I feel about it". Although this act of violence was outside Warren's physical control, his act of writing here pushes back in the private sphere, both acknowledging and addressing how soldier writing can be a mode of resistance and protest.

Public and private writing take very different forms and audiences, and as a result, perform different functions. The public sphere validates and reproduces certain genres of writing, such as black literary writing in the protest tradition during the 1960s. Public writing also requires a certain zeitgeist, and only writing that follows appropriate stylistic and artistic channels will surface there. Private writing, however, remains invisible to the public, and selective in its audience, and as such can be less restrictive and more liberatory. Asymmetrical authorship finds its home in private writing for this reason.

Clarke, and others like Warren, were also scholars and artists in a different realm, but they all shared one common reality: this WWII "band of brothers", soldiers of color, shared not only the work of WWII's fight against an international enemy, but internally grappled with the no man's land which rendered them invisible despite that work. Although one public move was to deny the importance of their own participation in the military, as Clarke himself did often, they made private moves in authorship in this no man's land, asymmetrical turns in engaging with whiteness. Unlike other black activist genres, private letter writing uses strategic silence and commonalities of racist experiences, not to establish a public perception of veterans of color, but to support each other within the invisible ranks of black soldiership. Their cultural citizenship comes from these shared practices of writing, as Clarke's own foundational work attests to the need for black unity above the work of nationalism inside the military. Where the military erased their contributions, systematically positioning them as second class citizens, Clarke and these other soldiers of color pushed back against such erasure in private spheres through asymmetrical authorship. Although such writings did not see

public audiences, Clarke's eventual public work in Africana studies began on such experiential foundations inside the national body of the American military.

The study of soldier letters as asymmetrical authorship can be seen as another mode of resistance writing. This opens up other avenues of possible research and connections to other generations of veterans. The post-9/11 generation of veterans, a growing population of veterans of color, also find themselves inside an ideological warfare that positions their bodies of color against an enemy of color, inside a national apparatus that proclaims freedom and liberation. Clarke's own writings while he was in military service, his subsequent mentorship of black veterans and eventual dismissal of this invisible work, present the possibility that veterans are often silenced and their authorship restricted and channeled into acceptable venues within the public civilian sphere. Examining sites of asymmetrical authorship can grant access to a new archive, one that promotes an understanding of how military personnel of color see and position themselves within a system of whiteness that erases their bodily reality. It proves important to acknowledge that there is not one reality in military life, and veteran authors of color are still writing their resistance against such a myth.

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Figure 1. “Sketch of Man.” Masood Ali Warren sketchbook, pencil and crayon, 17.8 x 12.4 cm. April 16, 1942. James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection of African American Arts and Letters Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

Figure 2. “Sketch of Lion.”Masood Ali Warren sketchbook, pencil and crayon, 17.8 x 12.4 cm. April 16, 1942. James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection of African American Arts and Letters, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

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